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Miss Mischief

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MISS MISCHIEF

A Novel.

BY

W. HEIMBURG.

Bertha Behrens.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

By MARY STUART SMITH.

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MISS MISCHIEF.

CHAPTER I.

THE LETTER.

THE feast was just over. One of the dull, dark days between Christmas and New Year's was drawing to its close; snow was falling in fine flakes; it was bitter cold and a biting east wind kept the people indoors. The old letter-carrier, with his big top-boots, was the only person astir upon the narrow side-walk; here and there he stopped at a house, becoming the bearer of good and bad news, joy and sorrow, without a feature of his face altering, satisfied, as he was, that he had no responsibility in the matter.

"There's one more run for me to take to-night,"

murmured he, pausing under a lantern and inspecting the back of a letter that bore this inscription:

MISS FREDRIKA TRAUTMANN,

Andersheim-on-the-Rhine,

Germany.

The old man shook his head and sighed weariedly as he turned into a street that looked darker and lonelier than the rest. He quickened his pace, and found his goal in about ten minutes, by the help of a friendly lantern. He rang at a door set in a garden-wall, from behind which could be heard the barking of a dog. Immediately afterward a door-bell tinkled, and a feeble light made visible the outlines of a respectable house.

"Halloa!" called the man from the outside. "The postman is here! Can I speak to Miss Trautmann?"

The door in the wall was opened, and a boy about twelve years old, with brown curls and eyes wide open from astonishment, looked first at the letter and then at the postman.

"For aunt?" he asked, breathlessly.

"For Miss Trautmann."

"Mother!" he shouted, running back into the house across a narrow, paved walk. "Aunt has got a letter!"

Hereupon he opened the door with the little glass window to the right of the dimly lighted hall, and a woman appeared on the threshold, lamp in hand. She wore a black-lace cap on her head, although her hair was but little gray, and her long-ish, pale face showed the most evident astonishment.

"My sister? A letter?"

Now, too, came the servant-girl, running from the kitchen, a simple, unsophisticated thing, that seemed likewise to be struck dumb with amazement.

"Give it here," said the lady, coming down the steps. "Where is the letter?"

"I am sorry, madam, but it must be put into her own hands."

"Her—her own hands?" stammered Mrs. Roettger.

"Yes, ma'am, else it cannot be delivered."

"Miss Trautmann is upstairs in her room. Louise, take this lamp and show the man up."

The boy had to be there, too, though. He bounded forward, always taking three steps at a time, and clattered along the passage as though running for dear life.

"Aunt," rang his voice through the hall—"Aunt Rika, here's a letter for you!"

He tore open her chamber-door and once more exclaimed:

"A letter, Aunt Rika! You've got a letter!"

"I? A letter?" was the response.

There was the utmost astonishment in the tones of this voice as well, but, at the same time, the voice

was so soft and sweet that the old letter-carrier involuntarily moderated his harsh speeeh and said politely :

"Good-evening, Miss. It is something for you to sign."

Upon this, there arose a form that had, up to this time, been seated at the window, but now crossed the chamber with light step; then a match was lit and soon a wax-taper burned in a highly polished brass candlestick, and a woman's white hand was feeling for writing materials.

"Be so good as to put your name here."

The handwriting was scrawling, for the fingers that held the pen trembled.

"Is there anything to pay?" asked the recipient of the letter.

"No, Miss."

"Is that so? But wait!" And the trembling fingers placed a silver coin in the postman's right hand.

"Thanks. Good evening. Your most obedient."

Heavy steps were heard in the front hall outside; but here within the walls of her own room stood Miss Fredrika Trautmann, motionless, not daring to open the letter that she held in her hand. The cheeks of the boy facing her were flushed with impatience and excitement.

"Why do you not read it, aunt?" he blurted out.

She started.

"Go down, Fritz," said she, stroking his curly head.

"But tell me who it is from, aunt?"

"I do not know.

"It is from Italy. Look at the stamp."

"Yes, but I do not know the sender. Go, my boy! Go!" she repeated once more, seeing that he still tarried.

The handsome boy in gray jacket ill-humoredly left the room. She followed him to the door, bolted it, and then sat down at the table near the candle.

She was no longer young, being probably as much as forty-five years old, but her face still showed the traces of former beauty. Grief had blanched her fair locks and dimmed the eyes that were once so bright; there were deep furrows about the small mouth and dark circles under the eyes; and yet at this instant a gleam of youth flashed across her agitated countenance.

"From Italy!" she whispered. "Tidings from him! From whom else?"

She opened the envelope and read. She no longer saw well, and had to bend low over the paper. Suddenly, though, her head sank lower and a hollow groan escaped her. Now she jumped up so hastily that she knocked over the candlestick, that fell to the floor, putting out the light. Darkness and silence followed.

Not for a long while did a sob proceed from the arm-chair by the window, that was faintly illumined by reflection from the snow—a passionate, bitter sob, that was at once hushed when the knock of a hard finger struck the door from the outside and the voice of Mrs. Roettger was heard calling:

"Are you not coming to supper, Fredrika? The potatoes are getting cold!"

"Please excuse me," answered Rika Trautmann.

"Why, what has happened? Speak out! We are dying of anxiety!" came again from the outside, in a tone of irritation.

"Yes, later. I am coming down, Minna."

"You are nothing but a blockhead! For aught I care—"

Mrs. Roettger's footsteps retreated.

Fredrika Trautmann had ceased weeping. She sat, supporting her head upon her hand, and gazed out of the window. The garden lay in ghostly shadow; the two bare walnut-trees by the hedges looked back against the gray background; Miss Trautmann could even see now quite distinctly the blocks of ice drifting along upon the Rhine. How horribly desolate, how dead it all looked! Was it true that there had ever been a spring, when the earth was green, full of blossoms and fragrance; when the moonbeams danced upon the waters and nightingales poured forth song? An evening when she had stood there under that walnut-tree in a white dress, watching, with a beating heart for the boat that was bringing him to her? It had been a brief dream; the frost had fallen that very spring night, so pitilessly and destructively, that not a bud had ever sprouted again.

They had not wanted her to follow the unknown artist, who had come there from nobody knows where—just to spread his painter's umbrella wherever he found a pretty spot. Her father had talked

of painters who did not earn their salt, her mother of the levity of such handsome young fellows, who were fine enough to look at to be sure, in their velvet coats, but for all that, were utterly good for nothing. But her sister, that far less beautiful sister, could not pardon the young man for having eyes for nobody else but Rika. Especially did she bear him a grudge for that evening when they were rowing home from the island, when he piloted his Rika out of the vessel in which she, Minna Trautmann, was sitting, and when, in spite of the distance, it was plain enough to discern the pair sat close together on the bench, arm linked in arm.

She it was who had betrayed their secret to her mother, and caused a black day to dawn over the Trautmann household, that brought many a tear to Rika's eyes. In the evening she had gone out once more to bid him farewell. Her sister had observed her motions, and called out to her, from the sofa where she was lying :

"Stay here, it is not proper—do you understand?"

Rika had nevertheless gone on her way with a defiant :

"Say what you like! No one can object to a leave-taking at least!"

Minna, however, had kept her counsel. The tone of anguish in which her sister had closed her speech, it is possible, touched even her heart, and Rika, under the old walnut-tree, was allowed to pass, undisturbed, the saddest, bitterest hours of her life.

Even now, at this distance of time, she could see his pale face so distinctly. "Are you sure you did

right to yield, my dear! What is to become of a poor fellow like me!" Such had been the words with which he had received his sentence. Not until she had flung her arms around his neck, sobbing upon his bosom, and stammering again and again: "I'll remain true to you! I'll never forget you. I cannot give you up!" Not until then had he too melted, and their tears flowed together.

"Will you write to me?" she asked, at last.

"If you wish it, dear Rika."

"It will be my only joy."

Then, after a long while:

"Frederick, will you be true to me?"

"I? Yes! But you?"

"Oh, always, always!" she had sobbed.

"I'll tell you what, Rika, I don't believe it; you are too sweet and too attractive for that!"

"Frederick, so help me God, you are the only man I shall ever care for, and I 'll wait for you, though I should grow old and gray-haired! And, if you are ever in need, only send me word, and though you should ask me for the stars in the heavens, I 'd bring them to you; and if I were sure it was for your happiness, I would run away with you this evening, without remorse or shame—but—"

"'But?'"

"But you are to be fortunate! I will not be a clog upon you; your art requires freedom; go—but think of me, do not forget me!"

"Stop crying," he had said consolingly to her, after a while. "Italy is not out of the world."

"Ah, Frederick, much too far away for love!

And the girls there—they are enticingly beautiful, I have read."

And then they had both laughed in the midst of their tears and kissed each other again.

"Never mind the girls. No one is as beautiful as you are!"

And once more they exchanged their vows:

"Farewell! I 'll be true to you!"

"Come again; I 'll wait for you; good-bye! God keep you!"

After these long years, she now fancied that she could hear his last words, as they came to her across the water:

"Farewell, my own true love!"

Alas, and afterward? How drearily the days had dragged along. She could not tell now whether she had been awake or dreaming all that time. One thing alone had broken the tiresome monotony; this was the arrival of his letters. Like stars glittering in a midnight sky had they shone in upon her life. Then came a suitor, she rejected him; another one, she would not have him. Her father was vexed at the repetition of the song: "I am not going to marry."

"She cannot forget that flighty painter," her sister had explained.

And once, when Rika was from home, her mother had ransacked her portfolio, found Fred's address, and her father had written him a very plain letter, to the effect that he should give up this senseless scribbling, inasmuch as the girl was beginning to

be rational, and was taking into consideration a suitable match.

Rika suspected nothing of the sort; only suffering under the silence of her beloved. Finally, one Christmas Eve, she fell sick. Below stairs, they were just celebrating the betrothal of her sister to Mr. Roettger; in the quiet sick-chamber, her brain was busy with thoughts of *him;* and one question fell again and again upon the ear of the nurse: "Have you forgotten me, darling? The girls down there are prettier, ah, so much prettier!"

After her recovery, Minna's wedding took place. Rika fainted in church, for she had overtaxed her strength. All spoke, however, of how wondrously beautiful she had looked, with her fair curls and a spray of white flowers in her hair. Captain Erbenstein, too, was of that opinion; but she paid no heed to his compliments, and the captain had to console himself as best he could.

And the years glided by. First died her father, then her mother; and the latter, when dying, had seized her hand, and said:

"You would not be happy, child. How it pains me!"

And the girl had answered, almost cheerfully:

"I would, dear mamma; but never—"

"Was allowed to," she wanted to say, but she could not let the dying parent carry a reproach with her to the grave.

Now she was alone in the large house that had been willed to her. Her sister, to be sure, came to

and fro, bringing with her, moreover, a child, a splendid, brown-haired little fellow, who knew how to work his way into the heart of the lonely woman with his merry, boyish laugh. He stayed more with his aunt than at home, being happier there; and when death loosed the bonds of an unhappy marriage, our little Fritz moved to his aunt's house for good and all, together with his mother, who once more took refuge in her childhood's home. She was only too glad to accept her sister's offer and occupy the ground-floor; for, according to her account, she found herself in distressed circumstances. The deceased had made away with most of her pretty property, as she contemptuously expressed herself. But, in fact, she had not lost an iota of her possessions, for she had been extremely close and saving.

Now Rika helped in her support. For that matter, she had nothing else to care for, and her sister's boy was the nearest relation she had in the whole world. What other use had the old maid for her money? Aunt Rika saw herself exalted to the doubtful dignity of a relation who has property to bequeath, and got along with Mrs. Roettger's quarrelsome and avaricious disposition as best she could. They could not understand each other, nor was this needful. Down-stairs, Minna was at full liberty to give her tea-parties and to crochet and knit her never ending bedspreads, while in the upper story a better life was lived. There old memories were listened to in solitary twilight hours; there a sketch was always standing on the easel, while books and

journals were also welcome; and from the grand piano sounded the glorious melodies of Beethoven and Schumann. Moreover, there sat the boy, listening to tales of the olden time, learning his Latin lesson, or playing upon his little violin.

Thus Rika had gradually settled down into outward calm. But if, perchance, her sister ruthlessly touched the old wound, the pain was as sharp and severe as ever. And she was always longing to know what had become of him; whether he had succumbed to misfortune and died, or had returned to Germany and was living happily and comfortably, or had stayed in Italy, taken a wife and forgotten his old love.

Never had any intelligence come—never—until to-night. Now it had come; but what news!

She suddenly stood up, like a person who has formed a quick decision, lighted the candle, and brought from the next room a dark, old-fashioned mantle and hood, and, carrying the letter in her hand, she left the room. She first went down into the kitchen, and bade the maid light a lantern and prepare to accompany her; then she knocked at her sister's door.

"Come in!"

Minna sat at the center-table, crocheting, while her son read.

"Dear me! How you do look!" cried Minna, shocked at the sight of her sister's pale face. "What in the world is the matter with you? Do tell me!"

"I have news of—" His name would not pass her pallid lips. "From Italy!"

"God save us! He is not coming back? Or are you off to him?"

Aunt Rika stood, drawn up to her full height, but answered not a word.

"Why, does he want you still? Has he at last gotten so far ahead that he can support a wife?"

"He is dead!" answered Rika.

Minna was abashed for a moment, in the presence of her sister's suppressed agony. She wanted to say something, but utterance failed her and she could only follow, with a vacant stare, the retreating form that now passed out of the door. Directly afterward the bell below rang, and Aunt Rika had left the house.

"Where can aunt be going?" queried her son.

"How do I know? Maybe she wants to order a wreath; however, she cannot send that so far. Heaven knows what project she has afoot! I am only glad that a final stop has been put to one thing."

"Was that the man Aunt Rika was engaged to?"

"Yes, something of the sort. But stick to your books; she 'll be back directly. She has run out though it is raining cats and dogs. When her passion has worn itself out, she will come home again."

Fritz obediently pored over his book, but for all that he could not learn. He sincerely loved his aunt; her company made up to him for the prosaic atmosphere with which his mother surrounded him, and that she had suffering to endure made him restless and mournful.

"If I only knew where she was," he ventured to remark, by and by.

"Go on with your studies!"

Meanwhile Miss Rika Trautmann, breasting tempest and driving snow, had crossed through a couple of dismal streets, and stepped up to a house with lofty gable ends, behind the window-shutters of whose lower story glimmered a light.

"Is your master at home?"

"Yes, indeed!" answered an old man, dressed in a sort of livery. "He is just smoking his pipe, and the madam is arranging the chess-board."

"Ask if I may interrupt them for a moment!"

"Why so, Miss Rika? You are always welcome." And without going to the room-door, he bawled out in a veritable voice of thunder:

"Miss Trautmann is here!"

Then he opened a door, disclosing to view a laughing and still quite comely lady.

"Always at home to you, dear Rika."

And drawing her guest over the threshold, she exclaimed:

"There, now, off with your mantle and hood! Now take a glass of wine? Husband, I'll fetch a bottle of the Eberbacher; and now, entertain each other well, meanwhile. I see by the look in your eyes that you have secrets. Well, I'm not jealous, although I might have good reason in this case," she called back.

"Chatterbox!" smilingly said a tall, elderly gentleman, who, one could see at a first glance, was a physician. And he had caught hold of his guest's hand and forced Rika to take a seat on the old-fashioned sofa.

"Well, how can I serve you? Is there anything amiss with Mrs. Roettger. You do look excessively pale, Miss Rika. You must not remain indoors so much, but go out walking more—"

"I did not come on the score of health, doctor. I wanted your advice in another matter; in short, I want to ask a favor of your brother, through your intervention. He is still in Florence, is he not?"

"Yes—at least he was there four weeks ago."

"I have a great favor to ask of him."

"That he will gladly grant, I am sure."

"I shall see to his losing nothing pecuniarily, of course. I only ask of him to go to Rome, call upon a lady there, and take charge of a youth he will find there, whom I wish him then to conduct over the Alps to Bâsle, where I shall be waiting to receive him."

"Humph! That sounds mysterious."

"There is no mystery about it," said she, faintly smiling. "This boy is the son of an old friend of mine who has recently died. In a letter that he wrote two days before his death, and which a colleague of his has transmitted to me, he begs of me to adopt his boy and have him brought to Germany."

"What is the child's name?"

She pressed her hand to her throat as though she were choking.

"Frederick Adami," she gasped.

"Ah, yes. Forgive me, Rika. I recognize the name—I—"

"I suffered on account of it myself, once upon a

time," he would have said, but hushed and silently considered the pure, noble countenance of the woman whom he had once so ardently loved and by whom he had been rejected, for the sake of this foreigner.

"You are willing to adopt his child, then?"

"Yes, dear doctor."

"How old is he?"

"Thirteen years; about as old as Fritz Roettger."

"Do you realize the burden that you are imposing upon yourself?"

"Perfectly."

"Then I will write to Oscar. From what I know of him, he will be delighted to take a trip to Rome. He may not or cannot reject your offer to defray his expenses, although, Heaven knows, money is the least consideration with him, in spite of his six-and-thirty years."

"And I will relieve him of the boy at Bâsle or Zurich, as he may prefer."

"I think, Rika, if he gets so far on the way as that, he will love to take a peep at the old homestead, and I 'll make a subscription to that end, myself."

"That would be still nicer. You know, doctor, I have never left the old nest, in all my life. But here is the address: 'Signora Adami, Piazza de Cappucini.'"

"Thanks," said the old gentleman, taking down the name.

The doctor's wife now came in, bearing a bottle

and wine-glasses, just as Rika was preparing to take her leave.

"No! No!" cried she. "You must take a glass of wine with us first. Have I gone down into the cellar for nothing?"

And she pressed a glass upon the guest, who was in such haste to depart.

"Well, then, Miss Rika, let us drink to the full success of your benevolent scheme!" said Doctor Kortum.

"My! What is on foot now?" exclaimed the trim little woman with flashing black eyes.

"She wants to adopt a child."

Mrs. Kortum threw up her hands and clasped them above her head.

"You don't mean it!" she cried. "You jest! It is not true!"

"Yes, but it is, though, wife. Do not stare so."

"But the responsibility! I would much rather take a poodle to pet or a pair of canaries."

"Hush, wife! She is going to do a good work. But—what will Minna say?"

"I am just going to give her the news," replied Rika, somewhat dejectedly.

"What will Minna say!" exclaimed the doctor's wife. "She will look just like our cat Peter when I have put the pan of milk out of his reach. Bless me, I should never pluck up the courage to break the news to her."

"It is hard, too," said the pale woman, softly, her eyes assuming a determined look. "Good-by. She is waiting for me."

Within the space of fifteen minutes, she was again at home, and entered the sitting-room. Minna was munching at a baked apple, while Fritz was listlessly turning over the leaves of his postage-stamp album.

"Ah, I'm so glad you have come, aunt!" he cried. "We can go upstairs now and finish reading that chapter in the 'Leather-Stocking Tales.'"

She suddenly laid her hand upon his head.

"Fritz, see here. You are to have a playmate in the house. I am going to have a visit—a long visit—from a lad of your own age. Are you glad?"

"Very!" shouted the youth. "You are too good, aunt!"

"What folly is that?" asked Minna.

"Adami's son is coming to my house," declared Rika, with apparent composure, but her bosom rose and fell tumultuously.

"Upon a visit?"

"No. Most likely for good and all, Minna."

"That is to say—that is to say—that you—"

"That I am to provide for him."

"That you are crazy, you mean!" cried Minna. And as her sister evaded all further discussion by leaving the room with a quiet good-night," she broke out into a fit of nervous laughter.

"So!" cried she, striking on the table with the palm of her hand—"So! It is all done for now. She has washed her hands of you, you poor fellow!"

"But—mother," began the boy, seeking to soothe her. But she pushed him back and took refuge in her own chamber, where she groaned as though the

heaviest calamity had befallen her; while the youth, on the other hand, was indulging in the rosiest pictures of the future, when he should have a comrade at his side.

And Aunt Rika sat above stairs, reading over again a long letter, the shaky characters of the script betraying the hand of a very ill person:

"The thought that you will grant my request makes it easier for me to die. I know that I have no right to ask anything at your hands; but I also know that you have not forgotten me. Too late I learned that your father had written falsely, when he informed me that you were happy by the side of some one else.

"We have been grievously sinned against, we two, poor dear! And yet we are not the only ones in the world whose lot it has been to learn what it means to renounce the thing dearest to them on earth. I have a son, Fredrika; I love him more than I can tell. While I live he is safe; but—afterward? His mother—I dare not put any accusation in writing.

"You take the child, please, and give him some love, some sunshine. God bless you! He is to reverence you as if he were your own child. Give him goodness and patience—give him love!

"Long years ago, when I got the above-mentioned letter from your father, it was with me, as a German song expresses it: 'It seemed to me as though the sun had vanished from the noonday sky.' I could not pretend to tell now the experience of that

wretched time. My power to will and to do was gone; I was completely paralyzed.

"It was the daughter of my landlady, who saved me from the worst, only that I might live to go through with what was yet worse. I no longer deserved anything. I hardly ever came home from the dram-shop; I ruined myself in the estimation of all my acquaintances, who urged me to reform. I was on the brink of a precipice. The landlady, my future mother-in-law, declared openly to me one day, that she would no longer suffer me to remain in her house, if I did not forthwith pay the bill she had against me for board. I laughed and showed her my empty pockets. Thereupon, in the noisy manner of her race, she began to threaten me with the police—and there stood her daughter at the door, pale and mute. When the old woman finally left the room, she dragged the girl out with her, and outside began a quarrel between the two women, while I was gathering together a few little things that had not been swallowed up at the pawnbroker's.

"The deep, full voice of the girl finally remained victorious; it grew still in the small house.

"Ah, Fredrika, it is hard for me to write all this to you, but I think you have a right to know how I came by my wife. It was on the evening of that same day; I had just taken in hand the last valuable article in my possession, which I was about to give to the respectable Donna Marchi, as the sole return I could make her for my board, and then quit the

place, never to see it again. There came a gentle knock at the door and Julia glided in.

"'Signor Federigo,' she whispered, 'you need not go away. Keep your studio, mother will let you, and you shall never hear an angry word from her again.'

"'How comes that?' asked I carelessly. It really was a matter of indifference to me whether I went or stayed.

"'I have—' She stopped and looked at me through the twilight, with her dark eyes that were glistening with tears. She was a pretty little creature, without a trace of color upon her sallow cheeks. I had hardly taken any notice of her, when she sat at her loom weaving ribbons out of silk threads, as she had been taught to do, at the house of an aunt at Sorrento.

"'What have you done, Julia?'

"'I have paid mother,' she ejaculated with great effort. 'I secretly saved it from my earnings; but she is not to know it, signor, else she would strike me dead.'

"'I am not going to accept it, Julia,' I said, curtly. 'You are a kind-hearted girl, but—that is impossible. Go and call your mother.'

"Then the girl fell at my feet and began to weep bitterly and passionately, gasping forth, in detached sentences, a few significant words. I was not to go; I was not to forsake her; she did not want to live without me, for she loved me. She had to confess it, for it was even so, and she would smother if she had to keep it any longer to herself. And if I were

to go away, she would run after me, and not a sound would she make, though I should spurn her and trample upon her. Then I lifted her up and drew her to my heart, thinking that you had given me up and that this poor child of the people stood high above the one who had broken with me the much-vaunted faith of a German woman. So, a few days afterward, she became my wife, and sat at her loom just the same as she had done before; while my mother-in-law washed for distinguished people, and I, too, was obliged to be industrious, for times were hard, and the little woman did want of a Sunday and on holidays to show herself, on my arm, at the theatre or in some *café*.

"But wretchedness, moral wretchedness, was not exorcised. In the beginning, after the birth of my boy, a gleam of sunshine came once more; but then in the beginning, with the child in my arms, I battled bravely against the influence of ignorance and narrowness of mind, and from the first dawning of his intelligence, I kept the boy in my studio, under my own eyes. There I worked until sickness caused the brush and palette to fall from my hands, and overpowering weakness took from me the ability any longer to hinder my darling from making his escape from the dull sick-room, and playing about the streets, in company that was not fit for him.

"My wife worked with redoubled diligence; at her side stood the cradle holding a second child. She was much in my studio, that last year, for my torture—God help me—for every word she spoke

was a dagger-thrust, an accusation against the miserable man on whom she had set her heart.

"And then I learned that you had remained true to me! That was the hardest thing, and yet so beautiful. Accept my thanks, Fredrika! Once more let me implore you to give the child your noble disposition, your lofty way of thinking, your fidelity. Farewell, and pardon me! I have never forgotten you."

Fredrika Trautmann sat still for a long while after she had finished reading, holding the letter in her hand. The candle burned down into the socket and went out; she did not observe it. A bitterness such as she had never experienced before gnawed at her heart.

"Oh, you!" she whispered, stretching out her hand toward the portrait of her parents. "Had you the right to make us two so wretched?"

And the more she reflected upon it, the greater became her longing to see the child of the man who had been so dear to her. All—all that he had asked of her for his son, she was going to give him, and more, yes, much more! As one drinks who is perishing from thirst, so she feasted upon the thoughts of the moment when she should extend her arms to take that child to her heart.

Would that the hour were already here!

CHAPTER II.

"NOT ONE, BUT TWO, CHILDREN COMING."

And the day grew near. Time had been tedious, but it had passed away somehow. Preparations for it had given the prospective mother by adoption much secret pleasure, in spite of her sister's taunts and the troubled looks of her nephew, who had been gradually convinced by his mother that gross injustice was being done him by the coming of that "foreign youngster." But she went on her way, not heeding obstructions. Two days beforehand, everything was in perfect order; at least, in the upper story of the old house, that wore its peaked gable-roof like a disproportionately tall headgear, and whose numberless dormer windows resembled sleepy eyes. Now the rusty old weather-cock creaked in the west winds that blustered across the Rhine; while in the streets of the humble little town the dear children were trotting along, clad in all manner of cheap finery; for it was Rose Monday, and the little people, at least, would dress up in their holiday array, like the grown ones down yonder in hallowed Cologne and up in golden Mayence.

Fritz Roettger, too, bounded upstairs into Aunt

Rika's room, although his mother had warned him that his aunt would no longer have any eyes for him.

His mother proved to be right, too. Aunt Rika sat on the sofa, pale and silent, while in front of her stood the doctor, with a letter in his hand, seeming partly to share her abstraction, for he scratched behind his ear as if deliberating. Fritz, moreover, clearly heard through his black horsehair peruke how he said:

"Yes, this is by no means the same thing, my dear Rika, although, to be sure, it is the next thing to it. Here you have it in writing. There is no help for it at present, but later—we can take advice. Forced—

"What are you standing here gaping for, boy?" said he, in harsh tones to the lad, who was listening with open mouth. "Run down; I hear the music already."

And when the disconcerted fellow had vanished, the doctor continued:

"You cannot be forced to adopt the second child, I am sure that Adami must have relations somewhere around in Germany, whose bounden duty it is to provide for these chidren."

"He has none at all, doctor."

"Well, we shall see about that. My brother, though, was in a most awkward predicament; only put it to yourself—'what does he say?'"

And he began to read:

"'I cannot tell you how it looked there in those poor lodgings near the Church of the Capucines.

The bare, dusty studio, in the center of which stood the bier of the young wife, who, as they told me, had caught the contagion through her devoted attentions to her consumptive husband, and fallen a victim herself to the same dread malady in an incredibly short space of time. There was, besides, an old half-witted person, the mother of the deceased, who was raising a terrible hue and cry over the burden still left upon her in the care of a child—an abominably bad child. She would be glad to keep the oldest, if I would only take *that one* away with me, and she pointed to a corner, where cowered a little girl, a miserable, scrawny little thing, with large, lack-luster eyes, whom neither scolding nor blows seemed to hurt any longer, most likely because she had been used to them every day of her life.

"'I put an end to the repulsive scene by declaring that I would take both children with me. It was an officious, inconsiderate thing to do, I admit; but my heart bled at the sight of the wretched little creature, and I do not believe that noble-mindedness and generosity have so far deserted the world that such a poor little thing should be left to perish. Were I any other than I am, dear brother, I would keep it myself; but as it is—'"

"I shall keep it!" said Rika, her voice interrupting the reader. "Gratification at this step," she added, "will come in time. So far it is only done under the spur of necessity."

And she pressed her old friend's hand, rang for

FRITZ WAS SUDDENLY CONFRONTED BY HIS AUNT RIKA.—*See Chapter IV.*

her maid and began a new commotion in the house, over the bed-chamber of her sister, who was just setting upon her head her black cap trimmed with woolen lace. Black-woolen lace she esteemed the greatest of economies, for it cost no washing and was durable.

"Louisa," she called into the room where the girl was scraping the stove, "what is going on upstairs there?"

And Louisa went off to find out, and came back with a terror-stricken face.

"Another surprise, madam! Miss Rika is putting up a second bed--a little one. She has had it brought down from the garret and put up next her own chamber; and Katie says that not one but two children are coming."

"Mercy upon us!" cried the enraged woman. 'What is she thinking about? Our house is no infant asylum!"

And she ran up the broad oaken staircase at the top of her speed and entered the open door of a small, alcove-like room with a single window, that her deceased father, the advocate, had used as a depository for law documents. There now stood a small trundle-bed, in which the two sisters had once dreamed their child-dreams and which Rika had just arranged into a comfortable resting-place for a little head.

"Well, I would not have believed it; but I cannot doubt the evidence of my own eyes," said Minna disconsolately.

"I can hardly believe it myself," answered her

sister, picking up an old chintz curtain that lay on the table and holding it up against the window.

"Well, you seem, at least, to want to be more economical in your arrangements for the comfort of this new accession," came from Minna's trembling lips: "or, is this, too, to be newly carpeted and scrubbed, and expensive toys bought, as for the young prince?"

And she pointed with her hand to the door opposite, over which shone in gilt letters, framed in evergreen boughs, the simple words:

GOD BLESS YOUR COMING.

Rika made no reply, but began to tack the dotted red calico to a curtain-pole. What was she to say? Any words might have unchained the tempest that had been long brewing in the air of this house, and she did want peace, peace for the sake of the children.

"If father and mother knew, they would turn over in their graves, not once, but twice," Minna continued.

So saying, she departed, to array herself in her black-silk dress, for she was invited to take coffee with Counselor Gerbach's wife, who had invited a large company of neighbors to make merry with her over punch and cake. There she sat, telling with uplifted eyes, what a real cross it was to have to do

with an old maid. Such incomprehensible whims as that Rika has, but she—she washes her hands in innocency! "Let things go topsy-turvy as they will. Never mind, you'll see, dear people; then think of me!"

CHAPTER III.

RIKA'S CHARGES.

It is Ash Wednesday, and all having been up much later than usual, everything is mournful and quiet; the old people have headache, the children indigestion; and, added to these troubles, an abominable east wind is blowing, that seeks its victims even through the crevices of the windows.

Minna had undertaken a large wash. What had she to do with the rejoicings overhead? The steam from the clothes-boiler penetrated into the great hall hung with portraits darkened by age, and mingled with the odor of freshly baked cake, that came down from Aunt Rika's newly furnished kitchen For Minna had announced that henceforth it would be better for each family to carry on its own housekeeping.

Minna prided herself on speaking out her mind "honestly." That this usually praiseworthy principle here found application in a way that must work mischief, she did not appreciate. With her, bluntness was synonymous with truth.

"I cannot dissemble," was her motto. "Whoever

does not like me as I am, let him keep away from me. Such a finical, reckless way of doing as that Rika has is hateful to me. It is neither flesh nor fowl, neither cold nor hot, and there's an end on 't!"

"You just go into the sitting-room, you booby, you, and do not show the tip end of your nose when those strange children come," was her harsh address to her son.

Fritz drew up his face, for he had already been made to decline his aunt's invitation to lunch, but there was no bending of the will of his mother. He contented himself, therefore, with taking a post of observation at the window, and kept the wall-gate as steadfastly in view as if he were in a shooting stand.

Overhead somebody else was sitting at the window and watching.

It was a moderate-sized, comfortable apartment with wainscoted walls and dark wood-work. In the middle of the room, under a hanging-lamp, stood a massive old oak table; an empty set of book-shelves hung on the wall by the porcelain stove, around which ran a wooden bench; it was yet to be filled. A few maps, a couple of pictures illustrating Roman history, a writing-desk and a bed completed the furniture. One would have thought Christmas had come, to look at the games, soldiers and picture-books on the table, all wreathed in evergreen. This was the room to be occupied by little Frederick Adami, and the merest glance showed that hope and love had presided over its arrangement.

Rika's heart almost ceased to beat when the bell

below was pulled. Old Dora, who had been a servant in the house at the time when Rika had been parted from him to whom she as secretly engaged, and who, now, long since a widow, had undertaken, at Miss Trautmann's request, the post of housekeeper, ran, as fast as her old legs would carry her, down-stairs to the front door, while her mistress stood at the top of the steps like a person paralyzed, seeing only one thing, viz., a slender, fair-haired boy, who was crossing the yard, holding on to the doctor's hand.

Rika's feet tottered. Like a decrepit old woman, she dragged herself to the room-door and out into the hall, and there she leaned against the balustrade with failing breath.

"My boy!" she whispered, in violent agitation. "My poor, precious boy! Welcome!" And she drew the boy's supple form close to her and stared him in the face and pressed her lips upon his brow; and the clear drops from her eyes ran down upon his thick, curly hair, just such hair as his father used to have. "Are you named Frederick, like your father? And were you glad to come to me? I shall love you dearly, Frederick. Do you understand me? You talk German, do you not?"

In some embarrassment, he had extricated himself from the strange lady's arms.

"Yes," he said, looking beyond her; "but Italian is prettier."

The doctor laughed awkwardly.

"Oscar," he called back, "are you not coming?"

"Yes, yes!" replied a voice. "But here sits this

little mischief on the stairs, and not a step farther will she move."

"There, now, come on, you obstinate little thing," he continued, "else I 'll carry you!"

Now was heard the shriek of a child, and immediately afterward, at the turn of the stairs, appeared a man with a big, crushed hat, bearing in his arms a queer little mortal. She lay there like a babe in long clothes, with her head dangling down behind, her eyes half shut, a defiant expression about her mouth, and her fist tightly clenched.

"Tell me precisely where this young lady's presentation is to take place?" sportively asked the sculptor, Oscar Kortum, the doctor's brother. "It is best that I should set her down on the very spot, else the shy bird will begin again to beat with her wings.

Rika opened the door to the boy's room, and there the artist set down upon two tiny little feet a diminutive creature quite droll to look npon. From a striped shawl of motley hues, tied around her waist, emerged a pale little face, framed in a wealth of dark, curly hair. Motionless stood the tiny child, presenting a pathetic spectacle. The only things about her that stirred were great golden hoops in her pretty little ears.

"Go to the lady and give her a kiss," said the sculptor, in Italian.

But the two little brown hands kept tightly clasped, her mouth was shut tight, and from beneath long lashes two big black eyes shyly scanned the

lady, who still held her brother embraced with one arm.

"Come to me, little one," was Rika's summons. But her voice sounded differently from when she had addressed her brother. "Come, my child! What is your name?"

"Julia," answered the boy in her stead. "Julia, after mamma."

"Come here, Julia!"

Rika Trautmann spoke impatiently, her face suddenly becoming suffused with red. And when the child stubbornly held back, she dragged her toward herself, and kneeling down in front of her, she held her by both shoulders and looked into her face, that appeared thin and pale, overshadowed as it was by a mass of disheveled locks.

"Not a trace of him! Strange! Strange!" spoke her heart. "This is her child—the child of the one who enjoyed the happiness that was mine by rights!"

Not a word of love had she for the trembling little creature. Almost rudely she let her go, and strightened herself up.

"Dora," said she to the old servant-woman, "take off her wraps and take her across to her own little room."

And again she turned to the youth, who was standing by the table and with glistening eyes regarding the treasures with which it was covered.

"They are all yours, Frederick. Examine them, and then we shall have our supper."

And she stepped to the door.

"I must ask you, gentlemen," she said, "to walk into my sitting-room until we go to supper. And let me thank you, Mr. Oscar Kortum, for the great favor that you have done me."

The brothers had quickly exchanged a silent glance. The younger sighed.

"I am sorry for the little one," he murmured.

"Wait a while," said the elder man consolingly.

Minna, meanwhile, was bustling about in the kitchen down-stairs. Inasmuch as her maid was helping in the wash, she was preparing dinner herself. The aroma of roast meat from the upper story, where the doctor and that "flighty" sculptor from Florence were dining, did not improve her temper. When, therefore, Fritz looked into the kitchen and asked if he really might not take dinner upstairs—Aunt Rika once more had invited him—she quite boiled over.

"Run, then, in the devil's name!" she bawled out, dashing a cover on the soup-pot with such violence that most discordant sounds were the result.

Then she ran into the laundry, and not a single piece was washed to please her. Then ensued sharp fault-finding and bitter reproaches, until, finally, she seated herself, with her kitchen apron on, in the arm-chair at the window of the sitting-room and mentally took her sister to task for her extravagance and lack of business capacity.

"And only to think of it—two—two!" she murmured. "That second one is just a little bit too much! It is a sin and a shame—enough to make one choke from rage!"

And just at this instant, there came from overhead the sound of a child's passionate screams, the tones denoting a violent temper, Minna thought; then Rika's voice, raised high as never before in her life; and now the listeners likewise distinguished Dora's treble pipe.

"Pretty carryings-on, to be sure!" said Minna to herself. "Dear me! When I remember the fuss Rika used to make if my boy pretended to whimper!"

Then it grew suddenly still; but into the room where her mistress sat came Louise, with rolled-up sleeves and wet apron.

"Did you hear, madam?" asked she, eagerly.

"Of course I did. I'm not deaf."

"Ah! But I dread what's to come! How will one ever get used to it? That little one, the girl, promises to be such a bad thing. Katie says she is eaten up with obstinacy and actually turned purple with rage."

"Your concern is about your washing."

"I'm going right away, ma'am; but I never did hear of such a thing as a child flying into a passion when a kindness is done it. Pity about the new doll! Katie has just thrown its pieces on the trash-heap."

Minna looked out of the window and Louise retired; not, however, until she had seen how the lady folded her hands in her lap and said:

"Oh, what a burden! What a burden! What a good-for-nothing thing!"

Peace fled from Rika's cosy sleeping-room that

evening. Up to midnight she was pacing to and fro, every nerve tingling. She took the wax-taper and tip-toed into the boy's room. He was not asleep, but lying with wide-open eyes considering his new surroundings.

"Go to sleep, my boy," she whispered, bending over him and stroking back his curls, that lay so boldly on the white, beautifully formed brow, just as his father's used to do.

"Yes, aunt."

"Do you like it here with me?" questioned she, tenderly.

"Oh, yes! Fritz and I want to buy a little dog in the morning. He says you will let us if I want it."

She was silent.

"You will let us, will you not?" asked he, throwing both his arms around her neck, and hugging her.

A "no" was upon the tip of her tongue, for she had refused her nephew the same request just a short while before, but the "no" was changed into a "yes" in response to the boy's affectionate appeal. She was conscious of her weakness and ashamed of herself.

"But go to sleep now."

"I will, aunt."

And then she went also to the little girl's resting-place. The child lay in her dainty little bed, fast asleep, but her mouth was unpleasantly drawn, and her fist clinched. Old Dora, too, slept profoundly on her heaped-up pillows. Fredrika put the candle upon a stand and stood in front of this child with her arms hanging down limp and with bowed head. What an

unfortunate character lurked in that frail little thing! Her heart still vibrated at the recollection of the day's scene. With glee had the boy displayed his treasures to his sister, and the girl had looked at them, with wide-open greedy eyes, but without stirring. And then Rika had held out to her a doll, a very ugly common doll, that Katie had bought for a few pennies, at the nearest shop and fetched it in all haste, because they had not thought of any playthings to please a girl. But the little one would not have it. As she had done upon her first arrival, she stuck her hands behind her back, and looked contemptuously away from the caricature to the Punch-and-Judy show, with which the boy was occupying himself. Then Rika took the doll and forcibly pressed it into the arms of the defiant little miss. And now came to pass something wholly unlooked for. The child's hands seized the gaudily dressed doll, and dashed it on the floor with such force that the china head broke into a thousand bits. A fiery glance was hurled at the shocked giver, and the tiny personage turned her back upon her. But a horrible feeling, such as she had never felt before, welled up in Rika's heart. She seized hold of the child, and led her roughly into the little room, where she was to sleep, and there—how did it happen that she could be so angry?—there she slapped the brown, bad little hands, until a loud screaming began, a tearless, dreadful screaming, that made her ears tingle. Dora at last succeeded in quieting the little culprit.

She had been too hard, Rika candidly admitted to

herself ; nevertheless, she was not equal to extending her hand, to touch caressingly that wizened face. Suddenly, though, she fell on her kness by the bed, and, weeping, clung to its posts.

"Oh, Lord!" she sobbed. "What a burden—what a heavy burden thou hast imposed upon me! Help me! My heart turns away from this child! I no longer recognize myself!"

And she thus lamented till the old woman awoke.

"Yes, yes, this little one is a burden—a heavy burden—miss. But, you know, nothing helps but goodness and patience."

"And just at this minute, that small but heavy burden talked in her dreams:

"*Mama mia! Mia carissima mama!*"*

It sounded as sweet and soft as when a little bird twitters in its sleep.

Rika gazed upon the child's face. She smiled. How enchanting she looked!

Ah, if she had smiled that way!

And again the tears gushed from her eyes, and she went quickly out, for she could no longer see the child now.

* "My mamma! My dearest mamma!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO FAMILIES.

A heavy burden, so all thought, this light-as-a-feather, strange little girl, who had fallen so unexpectedly and unwished-for into this house, and to none heavier than to her who had assumed the part of mother. The child fled before the approach of Rika's tall form into some corner, like those pretty lizards that sun themselves on a heap of ruins in her native Rome. Nothing brought her out of her stolidity—neither goodness nor severity. Minna was horrified at the sight of such a gypsy-like creature, and pictured her to her female friends in such colors that they were amazed to see quite a civilized-looking little being tripping along to school, holding old Dora's hand.

Wonderfully well, though, did the little one stand in her classes; so that it was almost hard to persuade her to go home, although in school, for the most part, she sat motionless in her seat, with her eyes riveted on her teacher and taking no notice of her schoolmates.

Dora roomed with her in the little chamber, where there was only space for the two couches, a

work-table and the child's corner. The old woman alone, of all the household, knew how to get along with "Jule." To be sure, she was apt to be dull of hearing when called Jule, standing still as a mouse when she was addressed by that name. But if the old woman bethought herself and called "Julia," she would obey immediately.

Julia never seemed to be so happy as in this corner; and when, in the next room—her aunt's dressing-room—the notes of a violin were heard, a smile played over her grave little face, and she would clasp her hands together while she listened, motionless, at the door.

"You like Fritz, do you?" asked Dora, seeing the girl's pretty little nose flattened against the window-pane, while, she followed, with her eyes, the plays of the boys in the garden. But she got no answer.

"You love your brother, though?" asked old Dora.

"Not so very much," answered the child.

"Well, you are candid, to say the least, almost as much so as Mrs. Minna Roettger, Heaven defend us!" And Dora was reminded that that lady never called the child anything but "Miss Mischief."

At last the servants, too, caught up this name, as well as the two boys, who had become great friends. Minna Roettger lent her countenance to this friendship, because Rika, in spite of her blind partiality for the fair-haired Frederick, was so just toward her nephew that she admitted him to a full share in all the privileges accorded her adopted son.

Frederick Adami, or "Fred," as Aunt Rika called him, gradually became the master of the house. Everything was regulated by him; it only needed a look of those blue eyes of his into his aunt's, and he had his way. His was a gladsome youth. Rika could not bring herself to chide him for misdemeanors, for bad school-reports and complaints of his teachers. She constantly found excuses for him, and the worst thing she ever did was to have him called into her room and to say entreatingly to him, with tears in her eyes:

"Fred, promise me that this shall not happen again."

This promise he would make with the greatest alacrity, to forget it in a half-hour afterward.

Fred was known throughout the whole town as one of the worst boys. The doctor shook his head in troubled manner, when he returned home, of an evening, from the inn, where the teachers of the gymnasium drank their beer; and often he would say to his wife:

"It all comes of his being trained by a woman. What is to be the end of it?"

"You must interpose, then, as guardian," answered she, pettishly.

But he expressed the opinion that he ought not and could not do so, for nothing had happened, so far, to justify his interference.

It was only good luck that, during all those long years of her solitude, Aunt Rika had not used up the interest of her property, and now found herself in a condition to gratify Fred in his expensive tastes.

The boy was vain, and had to have everything he wore *just so.* Her sister Minna called it "frippery," and, for all his begging and whining, her Fritz, you may be sure, had to put up with patched things. But Rika excused Fred's proclivity for elegance on the score of that sense of beauty which he had inherited from his father, who was an artist.

Ah, how she loved him—that handsome boy! Loved him as only a heart can love that has thirsted for years. So full of tender solicitude was she, so passionately blind, that there was no room in her heart for any person or thing but the son of the man whom she had loved. She found a painfully sweet delight in seeking out resemblances between them in their faces, dispositions, expressions, gestures; and rapturously would she draw the boy to her heart when she thought that she had found something. She owned a bust of his father. A friend of his, a young sculptor, had once molded it. During the long years of their separation it had stood upon a console above her work-table and been accounted by the lonely woman her most sacred treasure. There were moments when Fred resembled this beautiful head, as though he might have stood for its model, himself; and she loved those features. There was no room in her heart for Miss Mischief, so unlike her brother.

For two years the children had been in the house, when affairs took a bad turn. A coolness had arisen between Fred and Fritz, which soon grew to open enmity. One day it came to strife that involved the sympathies of the whole household and pro-

duced an irreparable breach in their friendship. Henceforth "upstairs" and "down-stairs" were arrayed against each other like two hostile armies. Even the maids in the kitchens took sides, each one for her own boy.

The day on which this happened had been a dark and stormy one—an unlucky day from the very start. Rika had waked up with the headache. Old Dora had then revealed to her that Miss Mischief had completely outgrown her last summer's frocks, so that an entirely new set must be made for her. Rika, who never found anything too much to give Fred, had sighed deeply.

In the down-stairs hall Minna was scolding the gardener because insects had spoiled the young green peas in the vegetable beds; and upon the man replying, respectfully, that he was not responsible for the existence of vermin, he got a yet sharper reprimand, and was finally threatened, by the angry woman, with instant dismissal.

Hearing this contention going on, Rika came down-stairs, for she hated discord. Her sister, who was just starting to go upstairs, met her on the landing of the broad staircase, and began, in loud, excited tones, to declare that she had had enough of that rough, old— Here, all of a sudden, the front door flew open, and the two boys rushed in. Minna stopped in the very middle of her speech, for again the door slammed, and the next minute the youths had flung their school-satchels into a corner and fell afoul of each other like two game-cocks.

So quickly was this done, that the two women

hardly knew how the two combatants had come there, who were now wrestling on the deal boards, pitching into each other with silent fury. For a few seconds, a breathless stillness prevailed; then came a heavy fall, and these hoarse words from Fritz:

"There, now, you are paid, you Roman dog!"

And Fred was stretched on the floor as pale as a sheet, his face distorted with anger and shame. The other fellow jumped into the corner, picked up his satchel and was on his way into the garden, when he was suddenly confronted by his aunt Rika.

"What were you thinking of, you dreadful boy!" she gasped. "How could you lift your big fist against one weaker than yourself? Go, I want to hear nothing more from you! Never!"

The robust young fellow calmly met her gaze; his breath still came quickly, and he was evidently still under the influence of excitement, but not for a moment did he forget with whom he spoke.

"You do not understand the matter, aunt," said he, making a circuit around her and disappearing through the back-door.

But Mrs. Roettger's demeanor was worthy of a hero's mother:

"Well, I'm glad he gave it to the boy; he has been wanting a whipping these many days!" declared she, composedly.

"What is that you say?" asked Rika, tremulously. "Surely, you are not going to take your badly behaved boy under your wing? Are you not ashamed of yourself? Do you entirely forget, then,

how very dear Fred is to me, and do you not admit that I had a right to expect some consideration to be shown to the poor, fatherless boy? You ought to punish your son; punish him until he feels it; I desire you to do so."

"It does not strike me in that light," replied her sister; "punish your own boy; for, certainly, Fritz has done nothing wrong."

"Come," said Aunt Rika, turning toward Fred, who had just picked himself up, and was examining his torn jacket-sleeve. "Come! If other boys misbehave, that is no reason why you should do the same! Be off to your room; I am seriously angry!"

Together the two mounted the stairs, and Minna went herself to fetch her boy from the garden, so that upstairs and downstairs audiences were held, but fruitlessly in both places.

"Mother," urged Fritz, "ask no more questions. He is a thoroughly bad fellow, that Fred."

Fred could only ill conceal a certain embarrassment beneath a false magnanimity.

"Let it be, aunt. He meant no great harm."

And Aunt Rika passed to her sitting-room, outwardly unreconciled, but inwardly quite touched.

"How high-minded he is!" said she. "Boys will fight sometimes, you know. He will not betray the secret source of their quarrelling. That is noble."

Nevertheless, she had informed him that this evening he must take his supper alone in his room, and not leave it either until he came to beg her pardon. She felt that for once she must interpose her authority with sternness.

The grimaces made by her adopted son, when she turned her back, she did not see. Frederick Adami doubled up his fists after she had withdrawn. Was it not too silly of her to shut him up like this? Pshaw! He was not obliged to mind her. He would simply go down into the garden, again tackle that awkward clown down there, and pay him back well. What concern was it of his if the white rabbit ran into his side of the partition instead of staying in that stupid fellow's And how came he, directly after that quarrel, to take up the cudgel so fiercely in his aunt's defense? *He*, Frederick Adami, could call her whatever he chose. To be sure, if Fritz babbled that Fred had called his adopted mother "old trash," besides bragging that be could do whatever he pleased with the old woman, because she was so wrapped up in him, that would be pretty awkward.

He was already upon the point of stealing off into the garden, when the door opened and in came old Dora with his dinner.

"How can you do so, Fred?" said she. "How can you find it in your heart to distress such a good aunt? You do not deserve to have her love you so much. Just think, she went herself and got you some quince preserves out of the store-room!"

A mocking smile played about the mouth of the handsome boy. For punishment she sent him his favorite dainty? Did not this prove that what he had said was exactly true? He gave up his purpose of going into the garden, and, with great appetite, seated himself at the table.

"Ask her pardon as soon as you are done," exorted the old woman.

"I have nothing to ask pardon for," answered he.

"You cannot go down, then, remember."

"I can if I choose; but I don't want to."

Then came evening. The threatening clouds had dispersed, and it was cooler out-of-doors. Frederick Adami waited for his aunt, and the aunt waited for him. Neither would yield. The boy stood at the window; down yonder Fritz was going into the rabbit-warren, whistling contentedly to himself. He was evidently reclaiming his property, putting the pretty white rabbit back into its old quarters and doubly locking the door of the partition, so that it could not come open again. Across the yard blew a moist, refleshing breeze, coming pleasantly up from the Rhine, and the boy sniffed it eagerly. Just now, somehow, he felt attracted to the stream more powerfully than ever before, for he longed to bathe his sore and smarting limbs in its clear, greenish waves.

Very well. Why should he not please "the old thing" and beg her pardon? So he picked up his straw hat and slunk over into the sitting-room.

His aunt was not there, but, instead, there stood his little sister, on a chair, in front of their aunt's work-table, her figure illumined by the rosy light of the setting sun that magically filled the deep window-niche. With one knee, the pretty creature, clad in faded pink calico, supported herself on this table. She had propped both arms against the wall, so that she almost embraced the little shelf which bore

her father's plaster bust. Her dark, curly head was bent forward and her pouting lips were imprinting a tender kiss upon the beautiful brow of the lifeless face. There was a sweet, shy fervor in the gesture of the little one that was enough to have touched anybody's heart.

One does not, in general, expect brothers to admire their sisters, more especially brothers in their teens; but that this brotherly hero should have raised his hand and pushed the little girl's face so violently against the plaster cast, that the collision hurled it from its stand, and it fell to the floor with a crash and was dashed to pieces—this was an act not to be excused on account of brotherly insensibility.

"Silly thing!" cried he, shocked himself. "See there what you have done now!"

And at this instant entered Aunt Rika. The little girl still stood upon the chair, motionless from fright; there was something unnaturally stolid in the pallor of her face; and the woman, who could be goodness itself, at sight of her shattered treasure became hard, until it amounted to cruelty.

"You abominable, wicked child!" cried she. "Did you come only to bring me misfortune? Would to God I had never seen you!"

She dragged the trembling child from the chair, and hurled her forward, so that her body fell against the outer door.

Dora picked her up. Silent and quivering the girl lay in her arms, and from her delicately curved upper lip trickled a drop of blood.

"Jule, darling Jule!" pleaded the old woman, while the tears ran down her cheeks, after she had laid the child upon her own little bed, and washed away the blood. "What have you done? Do tell me!"

But not a word of complaint or accusation crossed her lips, distorted as they were by pain.

Aunt Rika would not even see Julia, and ordered, moreover, that she should go hungry to bed. And so, while down in the garden, under the walnut-tree, her brother took tea beside the aunt, having been again taken into favor, the little girl sat at the window of a dark room upstairs, her eyes fastened upon the river, with a look of grief upon her face that was out of all keeping with her years; and as she sat thus she listened to the nightingale that was warbling below and to the gentle murmuring of the stream.

On the farther shore, from time to time, there would quiver a vivid flash of lightning, bathing the garden in red light. Entirely alone she sat there, for Dora had gone to visit her married step-daughter.

If she had been asked whether she were cold or hungry, she could hardly have told. She was only conscious of a longing after goodness, after love, after one caressing word. Oh, such an intense longing!

Then came a soft tap at the door.

"Here!" said Fritz's voice in a whisper; and it was the stranger because hitherto he had hardly deigned a glance at her—"here, little mischief!

Louise thinks that you did not get a mouthful of supper to-night."

And then the big boy stooped down and put a slice of buttered bread into the child's lap.

"Don't cry, now, Mischief," said he soothingly.

She did not cry, but neither did she eat. She gazed fixedly at the door through which the boy had vanished. Her little heart palpitated, and she was thrilled through and through.

Like a sunbeam that warms into life an expanding bud that had been well-nigh nipped by the cold, so good was done to that desolate child's heart by those few awkward words, and a spark was kindled in that affrighted soul which was one day to become a strong and mighty flame.

From that time Rika was cooler than ever toward the "mischievous child." The "upstairs" and "down-stairs" people continued to have strained relations. The sisters always exchanged salutations when they met; but that no love was lost between them the dullest observer could perceive. The boys went separately to school, and came home the same way. That they were in the same classes did not mend matters; for Fred took his own time about his studies, while Fritz learned with more diligence than ever before.

And thus divided did the old people enter upon the autumn of their lives and the young ones upon their spring—and lo! all of a sudden they were in the hey-day of this spring, and from children had become grown people.

CHAPTER V.

"NO MORE DARKNESS IN THE WORLD."

How delightful the day when a young girl calls herself eighteen! A peculiar charm attends it, more especially if that day falls upon the end of May, when all the rosebuds are bursting into bloom; when, moreover, the Rhine glides past that rose-garden and the perfume of blossoms fills the air. One can so easily picture to himself the happy one to whom this birthday has come, as she flits through the garden in white gown and beaming eyes, full of the rapturous joy of existence.

Thus it may and should be; but thus it was not with Miss Mischief on the May-day that she became eighteen years old. She awoke early, it is true; but this was just as usual. Not a trace of joyful expectation was stamped upon her countenance.

She had her little chamber all to herself now. Dora lived in the house no longer, but somewhere in the town, in a little rented room; for it was found that her services could now be dispensed with. "Jule" was grown up, and the young master

was no longer at home; so Rika dismissed the old woman, and only kept one maid, quite a young one, about fifteen years old. Anyhow, it was time for Julia to learn how to keep house.

The young girl was not surprised to-day that no myrtle stood by her bed nor a bunch of flowers, and that no dear, loving face leaned over hers, saying in tender tones: "God bless you, darling!" She made her toilet as usual, pushed open the window, drank in fresh draughts of morning air, while she plaited her long black hair, which was now arranged in a single knot at the back of her head. She had grown tall and slender, being still of delicate build, and having more the air of a foreigner than ever she had had in childhood. At all events, she was like her mother. She had a small Roman nose, a low forehead and a firm, round chin; the whole lighted up by a pair of dark, lustrous eyes, in which, as Mrs. Roettger expressed it, something glimmered. Well, we shall see what, if she does drop those long eye-lashes so modestly over them.

Her clothing was very simple. Aunt Rika made a point of doing all she could to tone down what was striking in her appearance. A light-blue calico gown and white apron, which the girl had set off with as much pretty needlework as was deemed allowable—such was her birthday attire. How was it to be any different, seeing that a large wash had been given out for the celebration of this day? Her beloved earings had long since been taken away from her; but to this day Julia mechanically clutched the tip of one of her small ears when she

was embarrassed, as formerly she had been accustomed to twirl the rings that hung there, under similar circumstances, until her aunt would tap her on the fingers. She did look in the mirror this morning a while longer than usual; but when she heard the clock strike seven, she ran hurriedly into the kitchen, to see after breakfast. Then, waiter in hand, she proceeded to the sitting-room, where Aunt Rika sat at the open window, looking toward her with a face that was pale and much aged.

"Good morning, aunt," said the young girl.

"Good morning, Julia," was the measured reply.

The girl filled the cups and settled herself in her chair.

"Does it suit you, aunt?"

Rika crossed over to where she sat.

"I congratulate you, my child," she said, touching the girl's forehead with her lips. "And here is a trifle for you." She put a little packet into her hand. "Be right saving with it, you know—"

A deep sigh closed this speech, and Rika sank back in her chair and began to stir the contents of her cup.

A momentary flush of joy brightened the girl's countenance.

"I thank you, dear aunt—and may I do as I like with the money?" asked she, without raising her eyes.

"Yes, provided that it is not spent on follies; that is to say, I did hope that you would save it up."

Julia spoke not a word, but it was evident that a damper had fallen upon her pleasure in the gift.

"To-day, toward evening," continued Rika, "when the house-linen is washed, you may go to the dress-maker's and have yourself fitted for a white dress. I used always to wear white when I was a young girl. The doctor's wife says she is going to invite you to her Easter-party. At eighteen, you have a right to some of the enjoyments of youth."

"Please, aunt," objected the girl, "let me stay at home. "I don't know those people, and—"

"If I only knew, Julia, why you keep yourself so aloof from the rest of the world! You are to go, I tell you! I desire it particularly, lest it be said I am not fond of you, and treat you like a step-child."

The young girl uttered not another word. She poured out a second cup for the old woman, and then prepared to leave the room.

"Be sure, now, and do not let the clothes be so shockingly blue, as they were the last time!" called out Rika after her; immediately afterwards drawing an unopened letter out of the pocket of her gray gown. Ere she broke open the seal she drew a deep breath, her color coming and going rapidly.

In the front hall below, divers articles of furniture were standing around, and Minna's maid was beating regular clouds of dust out of the brown-rep cushions, as if working for a wager. The doors of two rooms were wide open, the apartments of the young gentleman to whom these stiff-backed chairs and sofas belonged, and the char-woman scrubbed the floors with a zeal that argued fear of her mistress, who never took her eyes off her proceedings.

Minna had neither eyes nor ears for her, and Miss

Mischief could begin her birthday celebration undetained.

"If you would like to wash the table-cloths and napkins first," said the old washerwoman, addressing her, "then I'll help you to carry the basket." And in a few minutes the river was gained.

Only a narrow foot-path separated the garden from the shore, that was tolerably steep hereabout. Andersheim did not belong to those places on the glorious Rhine, past which rushes the detestable railroad between river and gardens; here, its track ran in the rear of the village, and on the water, especially in front of the Trautmann garden, it was just as idyllic as in those days when rails and steam-cars belonged to the realm of things unknown.

Steps led down to the river, and in front of these rocked the old boat, in the shade of the walnut-trees that lifted their luxuriant branches on high, stretching them over the garden-wall as though they wanted to see themselves mirrored in the crystal-clear waters beyond.

Julia drew forward the boat, stepped in and had the clothes-basket handed to her; then for a little while after the old woman had disappeared, she stood there idly gazing beyond the broad, glittering expanse of water, whither the great meadows stretched out on the other side, above which hung the soft blue haze of early morning.

How delicious this morning was! So grandly rushed the river, so merrily danced the sunbeams over thousands of little waves, so laden with perfume came the breeze, that the heart of that young

creature expanded and her eyes moistened, and involuntarily she folded her hands.

"If one were only not so utterly alone!" whispered she; and then there flashed up in her dreamy eyes a light as of two blessed stars of hope, and she smiled, while she knelt in the bow of the little boat and absent-mindedly dipped a napkin in the waves.

Then again she sat still, as though lost in thought, gazing into space, the corners of her mouth drooping in a way that strangely saddened and altered the expression of her whole face. And now she gave a slight shriek, for the napkin had slipped from her hand, and was floating fast down stream.

"Oh, me!" cried the affrighted girl. "It is the damask napkin with inwoven motto."

She leaped forward as far as possible and beat the water with a pole, as if that could help; then again she stood upright and, with wide-open eyes, scrutinized a boatman who was rowing up the river, close to the shore, and the figure of a man who was fishing up the napkin with a boat hook.

"Halloa!" called a deep voice. "It would not surprise me if it were a piece of Miss Mischief's doings. Of course! Yes; is it really you, Mischief?"

The boat had now come close up, and in it stood a tall, broad-shouldered man. With one hand he lifted his hat in greeting, while with the other he held fast the boat-hook, whence the napkin still dangled. But his eyes hung with unconcealed astonishment upon the maiden, who, with the pallor of a great excitement on her face, stood in

the gently rocking boat like some rare and charming picture.

"Well, how do you do?" said he finally. "For I see it is you, Mischief, and no mistake. Who else in the whole town should have such black hair and eyes? And who but Julia Adami could stand there so proudly, the very ideal of classical repose? And washing on your eighteenth birthday! However, that is classical, all the same, child; in old times it was, I believe, a favorite pastime with the daughters of princes."

And he tossed the napkin so that it fell, with a splash, upon the bow of the boat, in which the girl stood, and then swung himself over.

"Once more, Julia, I wish you good day, and many happy returns of your birthday!"

Hereupon she slowly held out to him a trembling little hand, but her eyes did not meet his. They were still standing thus, when the man who had rowed young Dr. Fritz Roettger here was already far down the stream again.

They were aroused from their silent absorption, by the rushing past of a steamer, that put their boat into considerable peril, by the violence of the commotion made in the water.

The doctor laughed.

"See, Miss Mischief, a little more, and it would have been with yourself like the poor napkin, and I should have had to fish you out. But tell me about everything in the world, child. What have you been doing with yourself these two years? You

have grown a foot! And what has become of that wizened-up little face of yours? You are—"

He was arrested in paying her a glowing compliment by the vivid blush that mantled her cheek.

"I believe your mother is not expecting you until Easter Eve," said she.

"Yes, that may well be; but Berlin suddenly became too narrow for me. I had nothing more to do there, so took my departure, and am here, as you see."

"And are you here to stay for good?" she asked falteringly.

"Possibly—at least, I promised mother that I would. It depends upon whether the worthy citizens of Andersheim will have the discernment to commit their precious bodies to my treatment."

"Are you not going in to see your mother?"

"No, not yet. I am very well pleased here; and as mother is not expecting me, there is no occasion to hurry. I would rather hear how the world fares with you now-a-days."

She had again begun to wash.

"Always the same," said she, while a few drops of water splashed upon her hair and rested there like sparkling gems.

He was silent and looked at her. What a queer sort of a girl this little Julia had grown to be, and how hopeless the sound of those words, "Always the same!" He felt oppressed in spirit, and he was to share in that monotonous existence, share in it his whole lifelong?

"Mischief," he implored, "be done with that

dabbling! The maid can do that surely. It is dreadful! You should rather enjoy your young life!" And he had suddenly seated himself beside her on the little bench, and thrown his arm around her. "You used always to give me a kiss when I came, you know? And at parting, too. To-day, on your birthday, I must give you one!"

And ere she knew how it happened, he had pressed his lips to hers. She quickly shrank and looked up at him. There was a strange gleam in those dark orbs of hers, for an instant, when her eye-lashes again fell, and her countenance grew almost stern.

"No more of that, please. I am no longer a child," said she.

"No harm meant, dear Mischief!" said he, rising and leaping upon shore, whence he made her a profound bow, then turned, and ran up the landing-stairs. "It is only that mother may have time to kill the fatted calf, Mischief. We 'll meet soon again?"

She gazed after him, every particle of color leaving her face.

How helplessly she sat there; and, all of a sudden, she clasped her hands before her eyes, as though the sun and the play of the waves blinded her; and thus she was still sitting when the old woman brought her a second basket of clothes to wash.

The young doctor bolted straight into his mother's sitting-room, at a time that he would not have selected himself had he had any idea of the scene being enacted there.

Yonder stood his mother, shivering by the porcelain stove, as if warmth were to be gotten there in summer, with a face full of vexation and red from anger, while at the window sat Aunt Rika, very pale, with a letter in her hand.

"Is that you, Fritz?" exclaimed his mother, as soon as she caught sight of him. "How lucky! Why you come in the very nick of time!"

And, after a hurried kiss, the excited woman drew him forward until he stood before his aunt's chair.

"There! You tell her, Fritz, once for all. She will not believe me."

"How do you do, aunt? What is this that you will not believe?" he asked as he greated her pleasantly.

"That Fred is a—a—wild blade, to use a mild term," cried his mother.

Aunt Rika looked at her nephew like a wounded doe. "Have mercy, Fritz, mercy!" said her tear-stained eyes.

"Alas! I can give you no news of Fred, aunt," said the young surgeon with friendly earnestness. "I only passed him once in the street. You can hardly imagine it, but in such a great city, where each one must go his own way, it—"

"I am so grieved, Fritz, that you two still shun each other's company."

"Aunt, it is so in the nature of things. Officers hold themselves—must hold themselves—rather aloof from common folks. It has not been of set purpose on either side," he said with honest intent to comfort her.

"Do not pretend as if you did not know that Fred

Adami plays the grand lord," said his mother with her amiable candor. "Ladies, dinners, suppers at the most expensive restaurants—if he does not know it I do, Rika, and tell you so to your face. Shut your eyes no longer to the fact, and tie up your purse-strings tighter, else that will happen which I prophesied eight years ago when that boy had made that big bill at the confectioner's. You'll leave this house a beggar, just as I told you then."

"Do pray," cried Aunt Rika, in an injured tone, "do not be forever raking up that old, forgotten story. As for the rest, I'll disturb you no longer, since we cannot agree. I am very glad, indeed, to see you at home again, Fritz, and wish you God's richest blessings," said she, turning to the young doctor, at the same time hastily leaving the room so that her relations might not see the tears that gushed from her eyes.

Her sister looked after her.

"Hard-headed to the last!" she cried.

"What did aunt want, dear mother?"

"What did she want? Why, money! A mortgage upon the house!"

"Has it come to that?" he asked, in a voice expressive of deep concern.

"Her difficulties began long ago. Two years ago I gave her three thousand dollars upon the house. She has an excessive dread of any public attention being called to her situation. To-day, she suddenly comes to me for a renewed loan. It is a pity! She has no longer enough to even cover the cost of her more than simple housekeeping; she stints herself

in all directions, almost to the point of going hungry. That good servant-girl has been dismissed, and Julia must needs move her hands briskly. But that is the very thing; if it were not for *her*, she could eat at my table, for I would willingly give her food. But there is that Mischief come to stay, and she must, forsooth, be kept like a princess."

The young doctor laughed aloud.

"Do princesses, nowadays, wash clothes in the Rhine?"

"Well, do not laugh too soon. Rika has just told me that the young lady, from this time forth, is to attend the balls at the Casino."

"Well, why not?"

"Dear me, only think of the cost! Dress, for the first item."

"Well, let us leave this subject. Can you not help aunt?"

"How can I? I have told her I would buy the house—for a moderate price, of course. Well, I just wish you would guess the price she asked—positively ridiculous! I represented to her that she would get her lodging free, besides use of the garden; but she stands to the sum she named at first. It would be dreadful, though'" continued the old lady, sighing, "if it should fall into other hands; it lies so well for your purposes—this quarter of the town is being newly built up and occupied by the nicest people. It were only endurable in one case; I could stand to have Neighbor Krautner buy it."

She made a pause.

"You will be obliged to marry, Fritz; an unmar-

ried doctor can never get along. So, a wife, in the very first place, is your greatest necessity."

The handsome fellow laughed outright.

"Mother, would you like to know what is really my greatest necessity," cried he. "Breakfast!"

Now, for the first time, the old lady realized that her son, whom she had not seen for two years, had taken her by surprise and was actually there in bodily presence. She ran quite nimbly, hither and thither, bringing up whatever she could lay her hands on in cellar and kitchen, meanwhile apologizing for the disorderly state in which he would find his own rooms. When, however, she at last sat still and saw him eating with excellent appetite, she said once more:

"It really is necessary, Fritz, for you to get yourself a wife. What father of a family in good circumstances would send for a young bachelor to attend his wife or daughters? As for the rest, this very afternoon we might pay visits to the Eisemanns and the Krautners."

"Whom shall we see there?"

"Well, the people are neighbors, and Theresa often sits with us in our arbor."

"Eh? Theresa? And who may she be, pray?"

"Mr. Krautner's daughter. She and Jule are great friends, both being about the same age. I would not suffer it if I were in Rika's place. But that girl has the art of catching all the rich people's ways. But what concern is it of mine? Say, though, do you really know nothing of Fred?"

"Mother," answered the young man, "do not

question me about him. Talking will not mend matters. I am only grieved for those two upstairs."

"Tell, though! Do tell—" cried his mother.

But he no longer heard what she said. He had to see if his trunk had come, he called back.

If the newly-arrived son had expected to be welcomed home with a feast in his honor at noonday luncheon, it only showed that he did not exactly know his own mother. There was nothing but the smell usual on washing and scouring-day, with the cold comfort attendant. However, Fritz was no epicure, and ate contentedly the plain fare set before him. But whether it were the odor of the steam from the clothes-boiler, or the fact that his room was too damp for him to go into it and unpack until toward evening, he found himself in a condition of the greatest discomfort.

In the sitting-room his mother was nodding in her chair, and from upstairs came dreamily the sound of a grinding coffee-mill. He stood upon the threshold of his future quarters. How bare it all looked! Well, if his books and instruments were only unpacked, then— But—good gracious!—where was he to put them? There was not even a press ready for them. Suddenly it occurred to him that the shelves from his deceased grandfather's office must be in the garret; and, smoking as he went, he mounted the stairs, stepping softly across the hall, so as not to disturb the afternoon nap of his poor afflicted aunt, and climbed the steep garret-steps.

Such a homely room, under the roof as it was, crowded with all manner of rubbish; such strong

wood-work, and that mysterious gloom such as spiders love to spin their webs in and under the shadow of which generations of mice lead a miserable existence, through dread of the house cat.

They no longer have such garrets in new-fashioned houses, where every corner must be turned into a habitation for man.

The young physician had always had a partiality for this place, from its association with his childish plays; for here they had hid themselves in its darkest corners to play cards, and here made their first trials in smoking. For the first time he began to have a home-feeling since he had gotten up here. And, actually, there hung still the rope in which he had swung Miss Mischief; and there in the chimney-corner stood the old broken wheel which the little girl used to take such delight in turning.

He set himself diligently to work in moving out of the way divers boxes, chairs and broken furniture, in order to reach the desired shelves, which he could see peeping out from behind, and, as he did this, he said to himself in an undertone:

"Beauty is another matter; but they 'll do for a beginning. Later, if I *must* marry, as mother says, then new things must be gotten."

At this instant he paused; the door of the garret-room opposite distinctly creaked, and, turning suddenly around, he saw this door close slowly.

"What, is the place actually haunted?" cried he; and with two bounds he had cleared the space between and was rattling at the bolt. One push, and the little hand that had held it with all its

strength from the inside, yielded, and Fritz stood before Miss Mischief.

"You here?" asked he, in bewilderment. "Do you still hide up here?"

"Oh, please go!" implored she, with embarrassment.

But he did not go.

"I want to see what you are carrying on up here," said he, crossing the threshold. Then he hushed.

In one corner, just under the blinking, drowsy dormer-window, whose glass, blind with age, scintillated in every color of the rainbow, stood an invalid's arm-chair, with moth-eaten cushions, in front of a table bearing all the materials for water-color painting. A quantity of little leather boxes, most probably meant for postage-stamps, lay in a small basket, and a half-dozen of them, ready-painted and set out to dry, stood in line like soldiers. He took one of the little boxes in his hand and examined it. The flying dove, carrying a tiny letter hung on his neck by a blue ribbon, seemed to have been painted by means of a few bold strokes; the motion of the bird's wings were true to nature, and in spite of the hackneyed design and evidently unpracticed hand, there was a tone of originality and skill about the whole.

He looked from the dove across to the girl. She stood before him pale and impatient, her teeth biting her under-lip.

"I had no suspicion, Julia, that you painted," said he; "but how came you to choose so monotonous an employment? For whom? Why should doves

be hatched out by the dozen? Does Aunt Rika know about it?"

"Nobody does. It is not for you to know either. Please forget it."

"But, Julia, do not be so unfriendly," he begged. "I should think you would know from the past that we are good comrades. Have I ever betrayed your confidence? To tell the truth, I am heartily rejoiced that you do something else besides washing. Only this manufacture of things by the quantity is unintelligible to me. Tell me, child, do you make a traffic of your pretty work? Pocket-money, is it? And have you been taught? You must have painted something else besides. Show it to me, please." And he snatched up an old leather portfolio, from which peeped out paper such as is used in water-color painting.

"Let that lie!" ordered she, with flashing eyes and her feet planted firmly. "It is only play," she added; "good for nothing, like myself. One Christmas I made aunt a present of such a little picture, and got scolded for my pains. Taught? Where should I get taught? I would learn nothing, you know. That"—and she pointed contemptuously to the little leather boxes—"that I do now because—I like to do it," she wound up, crossing her arms, and resembling, at that moment, one of the proudest old Roman dames who thinks to send from her presence a slave who has offended her.

"I want to tell you something, Julia," said he composedly. "You are painting to earn money. But for whom? For whom?"

"For whom else but myself, supposing that you are right?"

"I am afraid you—"

"Oh, please, don't be afraid of anything!" said she, with sparkling eyes. "As for the rest, I must go now and give the washerwoman her supper."

"All right; I'll go with you. I beg your pardon for annoying you."

There was a certain tone in his voice that softened her.

"Don't be angry, Fritz," she suddenly implored, holding out her right hand to him with averted face.

He took it compassionately in both his hands.

"Poor little Mischief!"

There was the same tone of sensibility with which he had once before, years ago, said to the child: "Now, don't cry; rather eat." And she drew her disengaged hand over her eyes to hide her glowing blushes.

"Julia," said he, softly drawing her to his side. And suddenly the girl's beautiful head lay upon his breast. "Child, you must have had a hard time of it all these years! But I am here now, and you must tell me everything. Do you hear? Everything that troubles you. I will not have you mournful in the very fairest days of your life. Now, just as before I went to Göttingen, you must remember that there is one to whom you can tell all your troubles."

She made no answer, but only suffered him to stroke her hair. Then he, too, became silent and let her head rest upon his bosom. And it was

so still up here, so deathly still! Only the wood-worm ticked in the rafters, and Fritz Roettger's heart beat so loud that he thought its throbbings must be heard. Slowly he then lifted the maiden's face and looked into the half-vailed depths of her beautiful eyes; and for the second time to-day he kissed her mouth, but this time more passionately than before and longer; and this time she made no resistance. Her arms were thrown tenderly and softly around his neck, and a sound as of a stifled shout of joy thrilled through the low-pitched room.

In a minute more she was alone. She knelt before the old arm-chair as though it were an altar for thank-offerings and folded her hands, her proud, beautiful face uplifted and full of rapture.

"Oh, Lord," she passionately exclaimed: "I thank Thee that for me there is no more darkness in the world!"

And down-stairs he stood, looking somewhat downcast.

"Folly!" he murmered. "What an old block-head I am! Zounds, though! I suppose I have a right to kiss my so-called cousin. Ahem! I wish I hadn't done it though. Heigh-ho! It signifies nothing I hope to Julia. That were the last drop in her cup, I do declare!"

"Fritz!" called the shrill voice of his mother. "I am ready. Let us go and call on the Krautners.'

He sighed and took his hat from the rack.

"Poor little Mischief!" he murmured once more.

Toward evening, Aunt Rika came back from the doctor's. She dragged one foot after the other as

heavily as though the pressure of care had paralyzed her limbs. Just then the whole atmosphere was, as it were, permeated with gold-dust, and the old gabled turrents of the town-houses, the fountains and garden-trees were tinted with crimson by the setting sun.

She saw none of this; her senses were closed to all but one thing: How could she get money? Suddenly, close before her, came forth from the low-arched door of a small house a girlish figure, walking rapidly along in front of her. What an elastic step and what a graceful, slender form, in spite of the ill-made gown.

What had come over Julia? Her feet fairly danced, and all the people that met her turned to get another peep at the radiant face beneath that round straw hat.

"Julia!" cried the old lady. Hereupon the girl turned quickly around, revealing a countenance luminous from the reflection of a great inward joy. The afflicted woman did not understand this. She was only conscious of beauty's enchanting power, and this ever vexed her anew, reminding her, as it did of the past. "Walk properly," said she, in fault-finding tones. The girl had now caught up with her. "Where have you been, Julia?"

"At the dressmaker's as you directed, aunt. I think the dress would be lovely if I could only get a few red ribbons to wear with it."

Her aunt did not reply.

"Come to my chamber this evening, I want your

help about some accounts," she remarked, after a while, and then they went along together.

Before the front gate, the upstairs and down-stairs people met.

"Well," asked Minna of her sister, "have you got any money? I'll wager the doctor has given you some. Now hasn't he? You are the one for luck, Rika!"

There sat aunt and niece upstairs, puzzling over accounts until late into the night of that May-day. The numbers grew confused before the eyes of the young girl; everything came out wrong, and Aunt Rika got more impatient and paler from minute to minute.

"Three thousand marks of interest to pay, and only four thousand five hundred of income!" murmured she. "Fred gets a thousand of that as an addition to his salary." And suddenly she put out the lamp and leaned back in her chair.

For awhile it seemed quite dark, but gradually this was made up for by the moonlight that poured into the little room through the window, and from out-doors sounded the warbling of nightingales and distant singing.

"Julia!" broke in harshly upon this peaceful quiet.

"Aunt?"

"It is hard for me to tell you, but—I cannot support you. You will have to go—and earn your own living. I have hardly enough for myself."

No answer.

"Julia, do you not hear? Come here!"

Then she came over, and the old lady looked into a stolid countenance.

"Didn't you understand me, child?"

"No!" was breathed rather than spoken.

"Well, then, I shall speak more plainly. Fred has used up more of my property than I was able to give. Everything in the world is so altered now. I had no idea myself what expenses the officer's rank entailed, and little dreamed what the outcome would be when he was ordered to Berlin, a year and a half ago. Only this much I know, that I have hardly enough left to keep soul and body together and that I cannot let you starve with me. You know a little about housekeeping, and, although you are not perfect in the business, you 'll learn little by little. Of course, just at first you will not expect high wages. I will put an advertisement in the newspaper, and some place will be found for you before midsummer. I must then see how I shall manage matters."

Still not a sound in reply.

"Well, Julia?"

All of a sudden, there was the girl on her knees before her.

"Let me starve with you, aunt!" she pleaded in a voice choked by sobs. "Oh, let me beg of you, please, please, not to send me from you! I 'll work day and night, and I can earn money *here!* You do not believe me? Oh, yes, I have done so already! I wanted it for— Oh, aunt, aunt, leave me here! I cannot go away!"

"You make my burden hard to bear," murmured the old lady.

"Aunt, we could rent out some of the rooms up here. I 'll work as a maid and will not go to balls nor seek my pleasure, but stay quietly here in the garden. Oh, just leave me here!"

And when the old lady did not stir, she continued her protest against being turned out of that wretched home, where she had been a stranger to love, and all the years of her young life had experienced nothing but neglect and hardness—continued to plead, because it seemed worse than death to shun *his* presence, that had been for her the sunshine of life since that evening when, after being berated and thrust out, she had sat alone in her little room, hungry and desolate, and *he* had comforted her.

"Aunt, dear aunt!"

With irresistible entreaty in their expression, those beautiful, flaming eyes were lifted to the woman who held the destiny of her life in her hands.

"We shall see. Stand up!"

That was all of the consolation that was granted her, but to the girl it seemed infinitely much. She jumped up.

"Thank you, aunt. You shall never repent of it."

Then she had vanished like the moonbeam that, a while ago, lay, silverly white, on the floor.

The solitary woman at the window gazed upon the dark cloud that had hidden the face of the moon, and again her heart was turned away from the child by recollection of its mother. Thus she had been wont to plead, too! What a lack of womanly pride!

If any one had said to her: "Rika Trautmann, go!" not a word would she have lost. But how could nobility of mind be expected in the daughter of a woman who had offered herself to her husband?

Julia, however, flew down the garden-walk. Exactly what she wanted she knew not herself. Her quivering nerves sought repose. She slipped through the little gate down to the river, and there stood pressing her hands upon her beating heart. The dark years of her childhood passed in review before her—those years for which *his* friendship had supplied the only brightness. And now that star had became a sun, a radiant, golden sun, and her night had changed into day—what a blissfully glorious day!

"Good-evening, Jule?" called out a clear voice behind her.

She started and turned around.

"Why are you standing there looking into the water, like one meditating suicide?"

"Good-evening, Theresa!" replied the girl, with a light sigh, and stepping up to the wall of the neighbor's garden, she reached up her hand to clasp that of a fair, graceful girl that leaned forward from a vine-covered bower.

"How are you getting along, my dear?" Theresa went on. "I congratulate you upon such a lovely birthday? I would have gladly come over, but saw you busy washing early in the morning, and in the afternoon your aunt came over on a visit with the doctor, and you know how father is—always happy if he finds a congenial spirit, whom he can drag down

into the cellar with him. They stayed with us to supper and have only just gone home."

The delicate face, crowned by fluffy golden hair, smiled down roguishly upon her young neighbor.

"Hark, Julia! I do believe that is your doctor singing there. Father's favorite song, too."

And the doctor's deep voice actually did ring out upon the night air:

"Only on the Rhine I'll live;
Only on the Rhine claim birth.
Golden wine thy vineyards give,
Rhineland, sweetest spot on earth!"

The girls listened, as still as mice. The singer on the other side of the wall came nearer. Now he had left the garden, descended the steps leading down to the water, and uncoupling the boat, rowed himself out into the broad, glistening river, as he had done innumerable times before when a boy.

"Good night," said Julia, softly, to her friend, slipping into the garden. But Theresa paid no heed to her; she was waving her handkerchief and calling across the water:

"Sing on, doctor! But beware of the Nixës!"

And, upon Julia's turning around, Theresa herself seemed transformed into a water-sprite, with her fair, glistening locks and her airy white robe; but from the boat no answer came back, and the girl smiled blissfully to herself. What if all the golden-haired water-sprites of the whole river should come, she was not afraid of them; for she had faith and loved.

CHAPTER VI.

DREAMS.

On the night after Fritz Roettger's arrival, two letters were written to Fred. Aunt Rika's letter ran thus:

"MY DARLING BOY: With this, I send you the money you wanted. I am sorry you have so many expenses; one pays dearly for epaulets, especially in Berlin. But the term there will soon roll around, and when you are in garrison, you can live more plainly again. Can you not, Fred? I had a little dispute with your Aunt Minna over this money. She is of opinion that you spend more than you ought to. She knows nothing about the claims made on an officer. We never had a military man in our family before. I trust you, and believe that you love your old aunt too much to be extravagant. You know how much money has fallen in value, and know, too, that I must make provision for your sister as well.

"I am rejoiced that we may expect you at Easter. You will bring sunshine with you for the holidays. Fritz is here. He says that you and he seldom or

never met in Berlin. I earnestly implore you to keep on good terms with him, for, remember, you are, neither of you, children any longer. God bless you, my heart's treasure! Always looking upon you in the light of a son, believe me to be, as ever, your loving aunt.

"FREDRIKA TRAUTMANN."

And Julia wrote also:

"DEAR FRED: I send you eight dollars that I have saved up. Please, please, though, do not write to aunt so soon again for money; she has, I believe, grave cares. It grieves me sorely to find from your letter to me, just received, that you are not making ends meet. Had you not better have become an engineer or man of business, as aunt wished, than an officer? But, I suppose, there is no help for that now. Aunt looks perfectly miserable. Do not let her know that I have sent you money. I earned it myself, secretly. I wanted so much to take painting lessons with it, but feel that it is well spent in helping you out of your difficulties. I thank you, too, for your congratulations, and am, as ever,

"Faithfully your sister,

"JULIA."

And these two letters, together with a money-order, were brought by a valet to his master in Berlin, who was still in bed, one Sunday morning toward ten o'clock. The cross look upon the young lieutenant's countenance smoothed down a little

when he heard the clinking of the gold that the postman in the next room (an elegant little parlor) now counted out upon the table, which still bore the remains of a fine supper.

"Well, thanks be! It is little enough, to be sure," murmured he.

The letters he passed by for the present, neither of them interesting him. In general, he hated so-called family letters. His old aunt's endearments bored him; and his sister— Good gracious, what coarse paper she used! What could she want? He always thought of this sister with a mixture of pity and dread. Pity, because she had passed such an unhappy youth, and dread, because if, perchance, no husband should be found for her, some day she might become a burden to him. What did this girl come into the world for, anyhow? So far, her existence had been as useless as possible.

He remembered distinctly the day when the little thing was born, and that life in his father's house was more wretched than usual the same luckless day. And now—now the old woman at home was only so cursedly stingy because this same sister must needs be provided for. Well, he would have to go home at Easter after all. It was no use; he could not forever escape paying this visit. For that matter, the idea had nothing so repulsive in it, for an Easter on the Rhine has it attractions, and, of course, the women could not expect him to spend the livelong day sitting in the garden with them. Their house was only a few hundred yards from the

steamboat landing, and, once one is on the deck, then—good-bye *ennui!*

Thus pondering, he dispatched his breakfast; then he wrote to a comrade that he thought he should accept the invitation to that jolly little supper in the evening when the theatre was out. Furthermore, he commissioned his valet to see to getting a certain kind of chocolate candy, the favorite bonbon of a certain lady, as well as a bunch of pink roses and lilies-of-the-valley, the pet flowers of another lady-acquaintance.

But, on Easter Eve, Aunt Rika, with tears of joy, folded her "dear boy" in her arms, and put the blame of his bloodshot eyes and pale complexion upon the hard work that his duty entailed and upon the unhealthy climate of Berlin. She had his favorite dishes prepared and the last bottle of Markobrunner brought up from the cellar; and Julia had set the table down in the garden, decorating it with a fragrant bunch of Easter lilies.

She was so happy! Her brother had gazed upon her in astonishment when she came to meet him with cheeks slightly flushed, and glorious dark eyes, whose luster was so much more effective from her habit of keeping them vailed ordinarily under their lashes. And, then, what red lips she had and pearly teeth! He had never known before that her teeth were so fine! But then, in those days, he had never seen her smile; and now she smiled as happy people, reminded of something strange, sweet and beautiful, do.

"How do you do, Fred?"

It sounded so sweet. He could not understand how shy, little, much-abused Miss Mischief could have turned out such a splendid girl as this, and he remembered the many sly pinches and blows that he had given her, and never one good word.

At all events she bore him no grudge, having cared for his comfort with all the solicitude of a true sister. She was happy, and happy people cannot be otherwise than good-natured. And with how little was she happy! How meager were her pleasures! He had no idea what a satisfying thing love is to a young girl. When she rose, early in the morning, to put the rooms in order, it was so delightful to listen, over the banisters, and hear Fritz's step as he passed through the echoing hall on his way to the Rhine across the garden. It was so nice to meet him in the garden a few hours later, and get from him a grave but kindly greeting. Not once had they shaken hands even. And why should they? Julia understood him. As yet, he was a poor doctor without a practice. How could he court her, then, he had once remarked quite correctly, to his mother, as they two were sitting in the arbor, and she, Julia, passed by, going to the vegetable-beds.

"You must observe, mother, that, first of all, I must establish myself, as a physician, on a firm footing. For the present, do not urge anything else on me. There is a time for everything, marriage along with the rest."

And there was aunt! Never in all her life had that stern woman been so gracious toward Julia as

during this glorious spring. Of an evening, she would come under her window, and call to Julia to come down and sit in the arbor; and then how the girl would fly down-stairs with her work-basket. For once, it had even happened, that Minna had relieved the much persecuted child of the mountain of stockings to be darned, so that the young people, the doctor, Theresa and Julia, might row across to the island. And how delightful had been that excursion! The doctor had sung—Theresa kept entreating him to go on—one song after another, now sad, then gay, until, finally, he closed with one that said:

"Where a rose-bush grows
Where a curtain blows,
Where, near the shore, boats
Ready lie;
Where two brown eyes gleam
Gazing o'er the stream
Oh! There would I fly,
Gladly fly!"

Yes, did not a rose-bush stand in front of her window, and was not its light curtain always fluttering in the breezes of this lush spring-time, and were not her eyes brown? Thus she sat, dreaming to herself, letting the water glide through her fingers, and not observing the coquettish glances cast upon the singer by a pair of lustrous blue eyes.

Theresa Krautner was a pretty and very stylish young woman. Her father's wealth was perceptible in every fold of her attire. Her figure was full and yet sufficiently delicate, a half-head shorter than

Julia. Her small feet were charmingly shod, and her chubby little hands were faultlessly gloved. Her gowns were made up by Frankfort's best tailor. She owned an elegantly furnished boudoir, hung with the richest tapestry, and a parrot and a pet dog, and reigned the undisputed mistress in her papa's beautiful villa. In brief, Theresa was a spoiled child, whose only trouble was that her papa could not rid himself of the manners of the former bricklayer's apprentice, who, forty years before, had entered a certain Thuringian village, bare-footed, with a knapsack hanging over his dusty smock-frock, and in time had become a master builder and contractor, and this so successfully, that gold-pieces fairly rained on him. "That saying, 'He picks up gold like pebbles in the street,' has been verified in me," he was accustomed to say. "When I first settled in that slow little town, no one would ever have dreamed that it was to become a great watering-place. And there is not a house in it, little or big, that I have not built."

Now, upon retiring from business, he had fixed his retreat in his old home, and it had assumed the shape of a magnificent villa. On an evening, he would sit at the common table of the neighboring inn, "*Die Traube*," on the identical spot where he had received the hardest knocks from his master, when a hod-carrier, for this inn had been built at that time. And so, where his cries of pain had once been heard, his least word was now listened to with respect when he had become a town-councilor and honorary citizen. He was very well satisfied with

himself, as he had a perfect right to be, and, as was natural, also, was jolly and round. Since the death of his wife, he had spoiled beyond measure his only daughter. He used to declare, moreover, that his Theresa might marry whom she pleased, no matter how poor the man might be, provided he was not an officer; *that* he could never agree to—never! "Rather see the girl hanged!" was usually his closing remark.

So far, the young lady had had no chance to be entrapped by any charmer in epaulets and gold lace, for at Andersheim there was nothing in the shape of a military man but the old counselor of the court of aids, who called himself on his visiting-cards: "Lieutenant off duty," and on the king's birthday appeared in a uniform fashioned before the flood and a helmet that was as high and peaked as a church-steeple. While escaping this danger, Theresa had been courted by assessors, teachers, merchants; but, so far, had refused to smile upon any, declaring that she was in no haste whatever to put herself under the yoke of matrimony, wanting first to enjoy her youth to the full.

"And right you are!" her admiring papa would exclaim, encouraging her spirit, with peals of laughter.

And now Easter Eve was abroad over the land, and Julia had laid the cloth for tea under the nut-tree. In the effusiveness of her new-found joy, she had coaxed her aunts so successfully that, for the first time in many years, the inmates of the house sat together at one board. The young men had

edged off as much as possible from one another; in fact. this bringing of the family into close quarters seemed, somehow, to fail to promote sociability. The elegant officer, in his light-gray undress uniform, with faultlessly kept hair and beard, his slender white hands with long finger-nails, formed a striking contrast with the broad-shouldered young surgeon, who wore a neat but plain every-day suit and the old straw hat which his mother had gotten for him some holidays ago. On account of the heat, he had pushed it far back upon his head. Fritz was the typical merry Rhinelander, although this charming art of taking life easily and pleasantly only lay like a vail over the earnestness that constituted the substantial part of his character. But the aversion that the two men felt for each other had remained the same.

The talk turned upon politics. Mrs. Roettger dabbled gladly in this, and prophesied year after year of the great war that was inevitable:

"It is coming this year! Look out! For I tell you things will come to a dreadful pass!"

Fred smiled contemptuously, and twirled his mustache by way of commentary upon a remark of the doctor's; and ere any one realized the nature of the situation, an angry altercation was in progress between the two young men. Finally, the doctor became silent, and jestingly asked to be helped again to the delicious shad on the table, the avoidance of whose bones engrossed him to such a degree that he could no longer take part in the discussion. Hereupon his mother took up the cudgel that he

had laid aside. The lieutenant, who was nervously playing with his food, continued the argument with her, only more sharply, for the sight of the doctor eating away so calmly irritated him. Surely he seemed extraordinarily indifferent to the opinion of his old school-mate.

"I believe, aunt," he snarled, "that you are entering upon a domain, where you are not exactly at home."

"That, indeed! Now it strikes thirteen o' the clock!" cried the angered woman. "The newly-hatched chicken, I presume, will undertake to dictate to me! Your freshly acquired wisdom will not go down with me, my boy; and the story of the egg that thought itself much wiser than the hen applies well to us. You understand, do you not?"

"Mother!" exclaimed her son, soothingly, seeing that she would talk on.

But she had hushed already, and her angry red face had relaxed into the sweetest of smiles, for, coming up the path, she descried visitors, namely, Mr. Krautner followed by his daughter. In a thrice, ruffled spirits were calmed under the benign influence of the old gentleman's hearty laugh and the sweet-toned "good evening" of the pretty girl. The plates were cleared away and dessert brought in. Aunt Minna, however, unhooked the bunch of keys from her girdle and sent her son into the wine-cellar, in order that Mr. Krautner might try the delicious sort of which she had spoken to him before—that had been the favorite wine of her sainted husband.

Julia was just coming down-stairs with a pair of lanterns as Fritz came up again from the cellar. For one instant her steps were arrested. She looked around after him, but he only gave her a passing nod, and opened the kitchen-door. In the reddish light of the candle, she thought he looked out of sorts. She wondered if Fred had vexed him? It was an unbearable thought to her. She waited until he returned from the kitchen with the bottle.

"Fritz," she asked, with hesitation, "are you angry with Fred?"

He looked up absent-mindedly, and his hand lightly touched her shoulder.

"No, my dear child," he said.

Then he had again vanished through the garden-gate.

Thoughtful and disappointed, she followed him. If he had had only one minute to give to her! He had been so friendly, but so—so hurried and absent-minded. She went up to the table and arranged the lights upon it; her seat was occupied by Theresa. She looked toward the other end of table, where the young doctor had sat a while ago. There Mr. Krautner had settled himself. Fritz sat at the upper end next to Theresa, and on her other side was Fred. No one thought of offering her a chair; she must needs get one for herself. But when she reached the remote spot in the garden whence she was to procure it, she sat down where she was, gazing fixedly, with longing eyes, over at the group beneath the chestnut-tree.

"I wonder if he will miss me?" she asked herself,

her glowing eyes fastened upon the young man, who was blowing, in discreet little clouds before him, the smoke from a cigar, without taking part in the very animated conversation carried on between his fair neighbor and the lieutenant.

He must have a consciousness of how she was looking at him, she told herself; but her glances did not seem to be so potent as she fancied. The loud laughter of the old gentleman greeted her ears at regular intervals. Then Aunt Rika stood up and moved slowly toward the house. The place beside him was empty, yet Julia did not stir; she felt so tired that she could have cried. Then her heart beat tumultuously. He got up and came along the walk under the grape-vines, just to where she was seated.

Breathless, she waited.

"One word only—a good word!" whispered her lips.

But shortly before he came to her, he turned around, without having caught sight of her, and walked to the banks of the Rhine. There he stood still by the wall and gazed upon the dark waters. A steam-tug was working its way along against the current, the number of boats that it had in tow being reckoned by the lanterns at their prows.

The doctor did not return to the company at table until his mother's sharp voice rang out: "Fritz! Fritz! Our neighbors want to go home!" when he turned, he and Theresa meeting very near to Julia's place of retreat.

"Where have you been hiding?" cried the young girl.

"Have you missed me?" he asked softly, bending over her.

She was silent, as if from embarrassment.

"Good night, Miss Theresa," was all he said, but their hands remained clasped for an instant; but just then the lieutenant coming up, Fritz formally lifted his hat, and once more turned silently into the shaded walk.

And Julia did her duty, gathering together the plates and glasses and folding up the table-cloth. She could hear Aunt Minna taking her son to task after her return from escorting their guests to the outer gate.

"If you were not such a full-grown man, I should really have to scold you. What in the world made you run away? It is certainly true that soldiers get ahead of you students in such things!"

"In what things?"

"You know well enough, you sly fox!" said she, in a lower tone. "So far as comparison goes, however, you have no reason to fear such a—"

Julia turned away, and thus missed hearing the flattering designation applied by Aunt Minna to her brother.

She slept sweetly, did poor Miss Mischief, in spite of her little heart being heavy with a dull sense of foreboding. However, she had recourse to her old means of finding rest—she buried her dark head in her pillow and, with closed eyes, lived over again those blissful moments up in the old garret-

room. Ah, surely Fritz had only wandered out into the garden because *she* no longer sat at table! Surely—yes. She was certain of it! And hugging this sweet conviction to her bosom, she slept the deep, dreamless sleep of a young mortal weary from much work.

"HARK, JULIA! I DO BELIEVE THAT IS YOUR DOCTOR!"—*See Chapter V.*

CHAPTER VII.

AN IDYL: THEN DISILLUSION.

It did not occur to the lieutenant to undertake the Easter excursion, of which he had spoken, and so his sister had now to forego her church-going and stand over the fire, cooking, for, according to Aunt Rika, a Prussian lieutenant at home on his Easter furlough could not be put off with a plain omelet for his dinner.

Julia submitted without a sigh. All people could not take a holiday, she said to herself. Fritz was gone, too, on professional duty, for he had four patients already! With what eager interest the young girl listened for the ringing of the new front-door bell, that had been put up for the young surgeon, and as befitted such a genuine messenger of evil it had a sharp, shrill tone. He had set off early in the morning, and Julia had ascertained that his uncle had taken him for a consultation into the country, in his own carriage.

Toward noon, her brother, dressed in uniform, with his saber clanking, had gone down-stairs, and

crossed the front hall on his way to pay a visit at Mr. Krautner's. To be sure he soon came back, for Papa Krautner was already seated at the dinner-table, although the clock had just struck twelve; and the maid had asserted very positively that the gentleman never allowed himself to be disturbed at meal-times. Suddenly another idea struck him. He stepped into the neat little kitchen where his sister was at work, and asked what she was going to do with herself the livelong day.

"I shall sit in the garden with my books," was her answer.

"With your books?"

"Yes, I love dearly to read."

"But it is horribly tiresome! Is there not a single young girl with whom you can associate?" asked he.

"Oh, yes. Theresa comes sometimes; it may be that she will pay me a visit to-day. She does not like to be in the crowd at Easter, either, and she is almost always over here of a Sunday."

"Yes, and she is right, too; I do not care for crowds either," said he. "How would it do then, Julia, if we took refuge in utter solitude, and I should row you across to the meadow?"

"That would be nice of you!" said his sister. "Nobody is over there, I know. Do not forget to invite Fritz, Fred," she said, looking another way, for she felt that she was blushing.

He seemed not to hear, and made haste to escape from the vapors of the kitchen. Arrived in his own

room, he threw himself on the sofa and spun golden cobwebs of the future.

In the afternoon, he rowed the two girls over to the meadow. The whole air was sweet with the breath of lilacs, the ships carried gay-colored flags, and the river was alive with boats filled with people in holiday attire. The meadow was deserted, for there was no public-house near.

The young officer chained the boat to an overhanging tree, and the three struck into a grass-grown path that led to the western end of the island, where, as the lieutenant maintained, was the most glorious spot for Theresa's hammock and the finest prospect. Julia followed, her pale, earnest countenance bearing the impress of disillusion. Fritz had not joined their party—indeed, had not come home. She paid no heed to the unwonted garrulity of her brother, who robbed a wild apple-tree of its blossoms to furnish a bouquet for Theresa.

However, the spot that he had selected was, indeed, beautiful; and as Theresa swung in her low hammock, her white gown fluttering about her like a cloud, while the lieutenant spread his handkerchief on the grass and lolled beside her, Julia took up her book and devoted herself to it with such assiduity that she soon became oblivious of the outer world. The chatting and laughter of the pair, the gentle murmuring of the water chimed in so well with the story of the lovely, fair-haired lady in her castle on the Rhine and with her secret love for the poet Hadlaub in Keller's charming novel, that she took

no note of the flight of time, and did not observe that the conversation of her companions grew lower and lower, until finally pauses ensued, long pauses, only broken by a song in the distance or a sigh close by or the splashing of the water against the beach.

And the sunbeams scattered their rays through the branches of the old elm-tree, deep, golden rays, for evening was at hand. Then the skies glowed with the flames of a gorgeous sunset, the grand old river crimsoned by their reflection ; and suddenly the cheeks of the fair girl were tinted with the same bright hue, as she sat upright in her hammock, with her head half averted from the man at her feet, at the same time that she permitted him to hold her hand, which he kissed again and again.

" But so quickly—I know not how to answer you," said she, falteringly ; and yet a smile of rapture played about her pretty mouth.

" When one feels as strongly as I do, there is no such thing as hesitation. I love swift resolves, and always know directly what I want and what I must have. I know that I love you, Theresa, knew it the very first second that our glances met."

In a frightened way she drew her hand out of his, for Julia had got up and gone past them to the shore.

" There he comes," said she to herself, with her eyes fixed upon a boat that was advancing rapidly across the shining water.

The two young people behind her looked at each other. Theresa laid her slender fingers upon her lips, and once more he seized her hand, which he

was conscious slightly returned his pressure. Then he, too, jumped to his feet.

"Good evening," said he, calmly, welcoming the young doctor, "you are just in time to mix our punch. Julia, unpack your lunch-basket!"

"Well, here I am at last!" exclaimed the doctor, cheerily. "When I was setting out to join you, a full hour ago—for mother told me where to find you—a poor wretch came in with a bloody head, and I had to sew up the gash. How do you do, Miss Theresa?" And he seated himself by that young lady's side and threw his hat upon a blooming bush near by. "Is it not a glorious evening?" he added.

And then he looked up at Theresa, who, in the roseate light by which she was environed, appeared as fresh as the apple blossoms that she wore in her belt.

"You have hair like the Lorelei herself," said he, in genuine admiration. "Nothing is lacking but the golden comb. Julia, are you mixing that punch? All right; I am too tired myself, not having had holiday like the rest of you."

They all enjoyed themselves very much at that little picnic, being as merry as young people can be, more especially young people on the Rhine, who have golden wine in their glasses and secret love in their hearts. Theresa's silver laugh was echoed incessantly by the doctor's deeper tones. The lieutenant laughed only now and then, while occasionally he would heave a sigh, and glance toward the witching Lorelei, quoting the lines:

"Of the Rhine, my son, beware, I say,
He meets his fate, who goes that way."

And again he sighed.

Julia alone was silent. She sat upon a log gazing upon the heavens, whence the red was fast fading. She had clasped her hands around one knee, and her beautiful profile was sharply defined against the bright background. But, although she took no part in the exuberant gayety of the others, she was, perhaps, the happiest of them all, for her trust was as immovable as her love.

Next morning, while the dew was still glistening on the grass, the young officer actually came from the garden. Julia could hardly trust the evidence of her own eyes. And directly afterward he whistled so merrily in his own room that a look of amazement crossed her grave countenance. And again he declined the proposed trip on the Rhine, but donned his uniform and crossed the yard with his sword clattering at his heels. Mrs. Roettger, who had just come from church, stopped in the street to look after him until he disappeared behind the wrought-iron gate marking the entrance to the Krautners' property.

The resolute woman suddenly experienced a qualm of apprehension. Oh, dear! If by any chance— But, no; he could not possibly thus take by storm the citadel over yonder! He was bold enough to make the attempt, for the boy always had a vast deal of assurance. Theresa is not to be caught in that net! He was a handsome man, too,

although, in her opinion, not to be compared to Fritz.

"I tell you, thought, I am curious!"

With these words, Mrs. Roettger seated herself at her window and waited for the officer's return. She had long to wait, and when he finally did come, she could make nothing out of his deportment. He clanked his sword more noisily, if possible, than he had done before, and his usually pale face was flushed; whether from joy or disappointment, though, she could not fathom.

It was not long before his lordly voice resounded, calling:

"Julia! Julia!"

The young girl rushed, terrified, into her brother's room. She had been closeted with her aunt, consulting with her over the afflicting fact that the month's income would not suffice for their present large expenditures, and many a little thrust she had patiently submitted to the while.

"Here I am, Freddie! Do tell me what is the matter?"

He had jerked off his coat and was pacing the room like one in despair.

"Can you hold your tongue, girl?" he finally asked

"I do not understand you. If you want to confide anything to me, of course, I shall not speak of it."

"You must help me!" he demanded. "Do you understand?"

"Always, if it is in my power, Fred."

"The thing has taken a cursed turn," continued he, speaking lower. "Theresa and I—"

"Theresa and—you?"

"Yes, Theresa and I engaged ourselves early this morning. Do not stare so. You do not know how silly you looked then. Has such a thing never happened before, as that a young lieutenant and a pretty girl became engaged?"

"Oh, dear!" stammered the girl. "But I am glad."

"Yes, so far so good. But, lo and behold, just now, when I went to that old Philistine to get his consent, he gave thanks for the honor, but—and—Well, the long and short of it is, he refused my offer, and in such a way!"

"How about Theresa, though?" she asked.

"I have not had a glimpse of her since. I assured the old donkey that Theresa would not resign me. Hereupon he smiled self-complacently, spreading his hands over his stomach and tapping it with the right forefinger, upon which shines a big seal-ring, assuring me that I need not distress myself lest she should not 'obey orders' and 'listen to reason.' A dreadful creature is that man! To think of his being one of us! It sickens one to the soul!"

"Poor Theresa! And so she loves you?"

"Such a question! As if there was any doubt of it! But now I want to send her a message—a bit of comfort you understand? You must go over there. The old man takes a nap after dinner. Tell her I must speak with her once more, and I'll remain true to her for all eternity. And her father must be

made to give in, for she is his darling, his only child."

As if exhausted, the young officer threw himself back in one corner of the sofa, all the tortures of disillusion being painted upon his livid features. Suddenly, his fist came down hard upon the table.

"And all would have been well! All!" he murmured.

"I'll fix it with Theresa. You make me feel sorry," said Julia, compassionately. "I think, too, if you both continue steadfast, her father must yield finally. He loves Theresa very dearly."

That was truly a sad day. At dinner, Aunt Rika, all of a sudden, without minding the presence of Julia, whom she had always been in the habit of sending out of the room when she talked business with her brother, began, in a husky voice, to explain to her foster-son that she was very sorry not to be able any longer to give him as large an addition to his income as she had hitherto done. She brought this out with downcast eyes, as though she were ashamed to confess her reduced circumstances.

He laughed a hard, bitter laugh, and drank off his wine-glass at a single swallow.

"An evil hour!" he then exclaimed, throwing his napkin upon the table, done up into a ball, and slamming the door behind him.

Rika Trautmann wiped a tear from her eyes.

"Aunt," said Julia, laying her hand tenderly and shyly upon the old maid's trembling, transparent right hand—"aunt, do not be cast down; we'll manage so as to bring all right. Let us sell the

house; shall we not? And then you'll be quite rich, and we 'll rent neat little lodgings, with an outlook upon the Rhine, and I'll make you so snug, so snug, that you 'll never miss this old house, which has never been anything but a burden to you."

But her hand was violently thrust aside.

"How can *you* know what it means to have a house of your own? There cannot be a trace of reverence in you, else you could not talk as if it were as easy to sell one's home as to butter a slice of bread."

Julia looked at her mournfully.

"Ah, if you only had an idea of how I love this house!" she wanted to say. But she was silent. They were both silent.

When the young girl had gone out with the dinner things, the one left behind pressed her hands to her eyes, and the tears gushed through her fingers. She felt the impulse to run after the child and beg her pardon for being so harsh with her, but could not bring herself to do it. But soon afterward, Julia slipped through the gate opening upon the Rhine from their garden, and found herself in the Krautner grounds. Unseen, she got into the house and through the garden-hall, which was furnished almost too richly with East-India matting, bamboo furniture and Japanese fans, and thence into her friend's boudoir. The Venetian blinds of the ample windows were lowered; the light pervading the whole room was subdued; and quite an overpowering odor of *eau de Cologne* and some sweet exotic perfume that

the young girl liked for her toilet-table filled the spaces.

The light-blue, rose-flowered furniture, framed in gilt, was set about in most disorderly array. In front of the fireplace lay the fragments of a porcelain statuette, and upon a lounge cowered Theresa Krautner, the victim of her cruel father. There she lay, with dry, defiant eyes, in a charming but tumbled white wrapper, waving a broken fan. When she caught sight of her friend, who approached her couch with almost solemn gravity, she turned her head aside and began to cry.

"Poor Theresa!" And the girl's pale face bent over her despairing friend. "Ah, it must be hard! But take courage. Fred sends his love and says he will remain true to you. He has just sent me over to tell you not to be faint-hearted. True love can overcome all obstacles, and there have been hard-hearted fathers before this one, Theresa."

"Eh! Eh! Eh!" sounded from behind her. "'Hard-hearted,' do you say, little miss?" And Councilor Krautner, who had come in unperceived, stood with his hands crossed over his fat paunch, his full-moon face in a broad grin, just in rear of the affrighted girl. "I am no hard-hearted father," said he, stroking Julia's cheek with the back of his hand. "I am only an experienced man, who has no idea of allowing his deluded child to rush into misery. Yes, into misery, I tell you, dear heart. But you are not expected to understand this, because you two are at the silliest of all ages."

"Dear Mr. Krautner"—Julia had uplifted both

hands—"but if they do love each other so much—so very much!"

"I do not believe them, for my part," he said. "And he is not going to die of it, neither is she. I know her better. And now, Theresa, I desire that this whimpering cease. Do you understand?"

The young girl had straightened herself up.

"I would have you to know, papa," cried she, with wrathful eyes, "I 'll never give him up! Never! Never!"

"Well, well, talk more about that by and by," was his rejoinder.

"And if you think that I shall forget him in time, then—"

"Yes, I do think so, little daughter."

"Then you are mistaken; and here, in presence of Julia, I declare to you that if in a year from to-day you have not given up your opposition to this engagement, then—"

"I shall take another," said he, finishing her sentence for her.

"We shall see," said she.

"Yes, we shall see; you are right. And now you can have your heart's desire in everything but one; I have sworn against having a military man for a son-in-law, and shall not swerve. Why so? That is all one to you. So, no soldier for you in general and not this one in particular. No unkindness meant, either, little neighbor," said he, turning to Julia; "but if a perfect stranger rushes in to take me by storm and wants my all; if Theresa, there, is so silly as to let herself be blinded in a

quarter of an hour, I am not. A clear head! That is the word at my house. Alois Krautner always has a clear head, otherwise he would never have gotten on as far as he has. Your most obedient servant."

"You never loved, father; that is the matter," said his daughter, with her lip quivering contemptuously.

"I? I wonder if I never did! I did with my senses about me, saucy minx! And hard did it go with me before I stood before her father and said: 'Give me your Hannah and your blessing. I am able to support a family. I can provide for a wife, and more besides.' There's the rub; note that. And now I have said my last word. Enough of that now, and no harm meant."

He went, closing the door after him, and they could hear his whistling from the outside. The tune was "*Der Alte Dessauer*," which he only whistled when something excited him very much. Even when his idolized Hannah died, with the big tears rolling down his cheeks, he had gone up and down the room, whistling as he walked: "So We Live!"

"There, you see what a sad life I have of it," said the pretty girl, bitterly, stroking back her disarranged curls from her forehead. "Comprehension, you see, and the finer sensibilities, he does not have. And do you know, Julia, when I tried to touch him by telling him that we had already mapped out our future life so beautifully, and that he had planned to show me Rome, his glorious birth-place, on our wedding-trip, he laughed as if I

had said the most absurd thing, and asked if we had already bought our Baedeker. To get so far, upon a two-day acquaintance, he deemed a thing impossible. He said that he and mamma, too, had once upon a time spent some days at Rome in a certain hotel, where they would have gotten along finely if they had had a stove and plenty of insect-powder. Oh, me! How can any one ridicule the most sacred things! But you, Julia, you must help us!" exclaimed she, jumping up. "If papa remains so obstinate, then we 'll run off—yes, I vow I shall. Say to Lieutenant Adami—" She stopped suddenly, for the thought suggested itself that she would make the proposal to the lieutenant herself. "At least," continued she, in a low tone, tugging at her handkerchief, "at least, you must be the bearer of our letters and help us to see each other again, dear Julia."

Julia did not answer; she looked straight before her, a little dark fold between her beautifully arched eyebrows.

"Do you hear?" cried Theresa, impatiently. "You are to help us. I want to speak to him again this very evening. You have your little garret-room—your studio. Nobody will search for us there, and you must tell your aunt that it is—"

"No!" came shortly and hardly from Julia's lips.

"What! You will not help your own brother—nor me, your only friend?" cried Theresa, who was arranging her front bangs before the mirror and pressing to her eyes a cloth dipped in cold water.

"No, Theresa, for the very reason that he is my

brother. I shall not do anything to encourage the impression that he is wooing you out of selfish motives, and—I think you had better depend upon yourselves. True love always hits its mark."

"Are you a simpleton?" burst from the enraged girl "How am I to help myself alone? Do you not yet know my father! No letter comes into this house, save in a locked portfolio, and from this hour on, he'll dog my every step, and—"

"You will certainly not help yourselves by a secret correspondence, behind his back. I would not think of it," answered Julia. "Prove to your father that your love is strong and true, and he will then be softened; and in the end, if Fred loves you so devotedly, he will for love of you, become something else than an officer—he is still young—if your father's only objection is that he will not give you to an officer. I would persuade my brother to take this step."

"Very gracious!" sounded back in a mocking and irritated tone. "I think on the other hand, that he was just made for an officer, and he shall not unbuckle his sword on my account!"

"You would not stickle so for rank if you really loved him so dearly," cried Julia, indignantly. "Do you love the coat or the man?"

Theresa made no reply.

"It he could become a land-owner, for example," urged Julia.

"Please," said Theresa, fretfully "spare your counsels, which show how very little you know of practical affairs. You had better go to him and tell

him that I want to talk with him once more, and nobody shall hinder me from it. But, no—you can let it alone—you put on such a face, one would think I was tempting you to commit a robbery. You need not be afraid that I will call upon you! No, indeed, I have only one more request to make of you: You must just dismiss the whole affair from your mind. Give me your hand upon it! I mean to depend upon myself alone. There, now! Say three times, on your word of honor, that you will not betray me to a living creature."

Julia proffered her hand, but spoke not a word. And Theresa paid no more heed to her friend's grave face.

She seated herself at a table and wrote with flying pen a few words upon a sheet of pale-lilac note-paper inscribed with a gold monogram.

"Good-bye," murmured Julia, with troubled countenance, passing through the garden on her way home.

Under the nut-tree stood her brother, looking even paler and more nervous than he had before.

"Well?" asked be, impatiently. "You have stayed an eternity, while I have been left here stretched upon the rack. What did she say?"

"She will be true to you, Fred—but—"

"But?"

"But her father will never give his consent."

He drew a breath of relief.

"If *she* only will," said he, softly.

He did not thank his sister once; hurriedly he ran up to his own room, and wrote a note to Moses

Aronsohn, Berlin, to the effect that the said gentleman had better have patience a while longer; for he was as good as sure of making a rich match, nothing standing in the way but the father's opposition. If, however, Mr. Aronsohn should make any attempt to disgrace him before the regiment, this marriage would be imperiled, and he would get nothing, since his aunt had lost all her property. Then he signed himself: "Yours most obediently," etc., etc.

He carried the letter himself to the post-office and returned with a lighter heart than he had had for many a day. When he was nearly at home, a pretty servant-girl who slowly passed him slipped a little pale-lilac note into his hand. Theresa asked him to meet her in the old arbor of their garden at nine o'clock, when her father would be at the inn called *Die Traube.*

When Julia had already been asleep, toward eleven o'clock, she was startled by a rattling at her window. She knew her brother's habit in earlier days had been to throw pebbles against her window-panes if he found the house locked up. She dressed herself quickly and slipped down-stairs to open the house-door, the key to which was always left in the lock on the inside. In came Fred.

"Why, I do declare, you go to roost with the chickens!" mocked he, stepping softly upstairs, humming a melody as he went. "Good night!" he whispered pleasantly, in the dark hall at the top, as he held his sister fast by her sleeve. "Theresa is a darling, I tell you; and my girl, when the wedding

comes off, I 'll give you a party-dress, as sure as you are born! And now, be good and kind to my little intended, and do not act the censor toward us. If ever you fall in love yourself, you will comprehend how one cannot agree to bend the knee before such an old tyrant as the one yonder, and that there is a sweetness in what is secret. But I believe an icicle like you can form no conception of a lover's feelings."

"Good night!" said she, and in her evening prayer she had one more request to proffer to the Father of us all. She besought him to bring these two together, to give them power to overcome all difficulties, and to incline the father to indulgence.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NIGHT OF THE BALL.

Minna Roettger's face had never shone so from inward satisfaction as it did this inauspicious season of late autumn. While she usually sighed in prospect of winter's approach, this year she rejoiced over every withered leaf that the wind took from the trees. For, in part, she had to thank these everlasting showers and storms for the sunshine of her soul.

The oldest people in the town could hardly remember ever having encountered such a disagreeable fall. Grippe and rheumatism were in full swing, and children's diseases became epidemic; the young doctor's bell was being pulled the whole day through and, with important mien, his mother noted down upon the slate hanging at her son's room-door the names of those seeking advice.

As though she had the most delightful news to communicate, she stepped forward to meet her son Fritz when he got home, weary and wet, in order to inform him that he must make haste, because, most likely, Superintendent Lindemann had a stroke of

apoplexy, and the school-teacher's children had, one and all, been luckily gotten to bed with every sign of scarlet-fever, and Cobbler Martin's old mother had another sharp attack of heart-trouble.

"It cannot go on so," declared the young physician, one day, as, in consequence of Doctor Kortum's sickness, summonses grew and grew. "There must be a stop put to this! I cannot hold out to attend to all Doctor Kortum's practice as well as my own, especially if I have to pay a visit to every one who has merely a swollen jaw or finger-ache. I shall have regular office-hours, requiring patients who are not bed-ridden to come to me."

"That will be well," assented his mother. "Yes, Fritz, would you ever have thought that you could walk so speedily into the finest practice in the place?"

"Well, that comes from the charm of novelty," he answered evasively, going into his room to compose an advertisement for the weekly paper that should let the inhabitants of Andersheim know that Doctor Roettger's office-hours were from eight to nine A. M. and from three to four P. M. On Sundays and Wednesdays, from nine until ten, his services would be given gratis to patients unable to pay fees.

Now, every morning and afternoon, Minna sat at the window, behind the curtains of her sitting-room, counting those who, weary and worn, came to her Fritz for relief.

And, verily, a multitude of patients crossed over the old yard into the open front-door to ask advice —patients from the first families in the place.

Mothers came with their young daughters, and the young wives of rich manufacturers came with their children; for Fritz had acquired the reputation of being skilled in the treatment of the very young; and even the beautiful and mysterious widow who was said to be from Russia, fairly smothered in her long, black-crape vail, made her appearance one day, and Minna shrank almost with terror before the dazzling beauty of her marble-like features.

"God shield him," said she to herself, "lest he fall in love with such a one who has nothing and is nothing."

It would have been the delight of her heart, if she could have taken her staion over in the reception-room during office-hours, but this she did not venture upon, even when her best friend, the burgomaster's wife, appeared, followed by her cook, who had a bad finger. But, one day, her son gave her the desire of her heart.

"Mother," said he, "I wish you would occasionally contrive to have something to do in the reception-room during office-hours. In the first place, the people will be under some restraint, and not cause one another, mentally, spasms of pain with their tales of horrible sicknesses; and, in the second place, the precious ignoramuses will not undertake, in your presence, to renew their attacks upon my microscope and other apparatus."

The very next morning, Minna decked herself out in her best cap and good black-stuff gown, tied on her silk apron and presided in her son's anteroom with a face flushed from pride. Alas! she

performed the task with her vaunted candor and energy. Young Mrs. Amtmann, who, in reply to Minna's questions, hesitatingly admitted that she coughed a great deal, received the consolation that her two older sisters had begun to cough at her age, and had died soon afterward of consumption.

"And, if I had been your mother, young lady, I should never have allowed you to marry," concluded the worthy woman, "but would have bundled you up, bag and baggage, and carried you to the South."

Tears rushed into the poor little woman's eyes. She loved life, she loved her husband and her bouncing baby-boy; and when she afterward took her seat before the young doctor, her slender frame shook with a convulsive sob; and Fritz gradually drew from her the nature of the comfort that his mother had dispensed to her. And he was just about to examine the patient, who had become somewhat quieted down, when a child shrieked so piteously in the ante-room that he rushed out in dismay.

There he found his mother holding on her lap the five-year-old boy of a railroad man, who, with pale, distorted countenance, was struggling to get down, uttering one piercing yell after the other.

"Dear me, mother, what is the matter?" he asked.

"The silly boy must needs show me his sore finger. And then, just out of fun, I told him that presently you would cut up his stomach with a

great long knife, because it all came of eating too many cherries," she pettishly reported.

The doctor shook his head and had trouble in soothing the little fellow. But Minna assumed an injured air, because of the sign of displeasure given her, and said something about "silly boy," and vanished.

Toward evening, she had already forgotten her discomfiture of the morning. She moved to and fro in her son's room, where she laid out an especially fine plaited shirt, besides his dress-suit brushed by her own hand. She wanted to appear with him in style to-night, for the first Casino ball was to take place. The old lady herself still wore the company-cap, fastened to her gray hair by large gold pins that she had worn in the morning.

"I hope nobody will call you off this evening," she said. "To be sure, it looks something like it when you hurry off so from the dinner-table. But I should hate to spoil my boots so in this dreadful rainy weather."

He did not seem to be in the rosiest of moods, and answered quite abstractedly, as he threw himself wearily on the sofa. But his mother took advantage of the time that remained to her before she must dress for the ball to justify herself for what she had done in the morning, while she poured out a cup of coffee for her Fritz.

"I always took little Mrs. Amtmann for a goose, but not such a big one as that. Such a hullabaloo! As if it were fresh news to her that her sisters had died of consumption!"

"But we do not remind patients of things of that sort."

"Is that so?" cried she, standing akimbo in front of her son. "Why, you would not make her believe, I hope, that she had a hundred years to live?"

"No, mother, but it stands to reason that patients must neither be alarmed nor agitated by such tales."

"Well, I am of a different opinion. Let her be distressed so that she will take care of herself! Observe, please, she is not going to tease her husband this year to take her out to balls and—"

"You would make a distinguished doctor, mother," he exclaimed, with merriment that was rather forced. "But now it is time that you were dressing, and be sure to look spry. Please, though, go in advance of me; it may be that I'll have to be somewhat delayed. I have still a letter to write."

Mrs. Roettger disappeared, and he kept his place for a little while. Then he mounted the stairs and knocked at Aunt Rika's door.

"Is Miss Mischief there?" he asked, into the darkness.

"No," sounded back.

"Where is she then?"

"How should I know?" sighed Aunt Rika. "I have not seen her since it grew dark. She is so peculiar; perhaps she is grieving because she cannot go to the ball, but I cannot help it; not a penny can I spend for such nonsense."

And this time Aunt Rika was not wrong in her conjecture. At the midday meal, Julia's face had become a shade paler, just when her Aunt Minna's

maid had come in, asking Miss Julia, in the said mistress's name, please to arrange the lace on her black silk dress in more modern style, "for," as the servant added, "ordinarily Mrs. Roettger would not care, but to-night, as she is going with the doctor, she does want to appear well."

Miss Mischief had done as she was requested, in the most conscientious manner, and as she worked, the glories of the coming Casino ball were painted to her in glowing terms. It did not enter the mind of the talkative maid that the heart of a young fellow-being was thus being made heavy. Miss Mischief's going to a ball was not to be imagined; but longing after such a pleasure forced tears to the eyes of the slender girl, who sat there so diligently tacking old lace upon the rustling silk in her lap. Ah, she was not sighing after the splendors there—only because *he* was going without her. A tormenting sensation suddenly overcame her; she knew it not; she only felt its pain, not being conscious that its name was—jealousy.

With trembling fingers she finished her sewing, hastily threw the gown over a chair and ran out. She paused in the hall. Whither go with her sorrow? She opened the door that led into the garden and stood under the little projecting roof. The rain was pattering down, the wind bent the boughs of the trees, and through the darkness gleamed lights from a few windows. Yes, yonder in the elegant Krautner villa sat one who was not happy, either, who would spend this evening in solitude, while all the rest of the world were enjoying them-

selves. Solitary would she be, with a heart aching like hers. And thus she was impelled, suddenly, to dash through rain and wind across to their friend, whom she had more and more avoided, since that friend had become her brother's betrothed. She wanted to look into a pair of eyes that were not happy, either; she wanted to press Theresa's hand once more. She had drawn a shawl over her head and hurried through the wet walks of the garden. Now she stood upon the mosaic tiles of the brightly lighted hall before Theresa's door and knocked.

"Come in!" greeted her cheerfully.

Julia turned the knob and then stood upon the threshold with the expression of a child who awakes suddenly to find herself in fairyland. Brilliantly illumined was the snug, little nest, the flames of the gas-jets glittered in the silken folds of the drapery on the walls and sparkled like hundreds of flashing stars from the beautiful girl's airy dress of pale blue embroidered with silver. She was turning around before a great mirror, surveying herself with much self-satisfaction.

"Ah, is that you? Come in!" cried Theresa. "The chamber is cold. But it is nice of you, Julia. You can help me to put this thing here into my hair." And she held out to the girl a little diamond star, that flashed and sparkled in every color of the rainbow. "Look! Isn't it pretty, Julia? Only think, papa just gave it to me to-day." And she now proceeded to test where the glittering ornament would look most becoming, and finally

stuck it skillfully above the forehead, where it nestled securely amid the fluffy waves of her golden hair. "Does it please you?" she asked, pouring a flood of *eau de Cologne* over her hands.

Julia had remained standing by the little fireplace, and had involuntarily drawn closely about her her dark dress, damp as it was from exposure to the rain.

"Oh, very, very much!" answered she, "But—"

"Well—but?" asked Theresa, beginning to draw on her yard-long gloves, while she sent her maid out after papa.

"But I thought you would not go to the ball, Theresa?"

"There you thought wrong. Why am I not to go? One lives only once, and there is no use in hugging one's sorrow forever."

"Certainly not. I only fancied that the ball would give you no pleasure."

Theresa was relieved of making a reply by the entrance of her father, who came in in his lively way, greeting his beautiful daughter with a loud—

"Bravo! Bravo, Theresa!"

"And see, papa, how exquisitely the little star shines up there!" cried she, turning her head to him.

"Yes, yes! But there is less to shine in my purse," he laughed. And tapping Julia on the shoulder, he added: "Alois Krautner ought to be put in prison for his extravagance. But what is one to do? She *will* have everything that is the fashion—

everything that is the fashion ; but she does not get everything. To-day she has been lucky. But it is not so always. Is it, my pet?"

"No, indeed. You always have your way," she nodded, apparently pouting; and when the old gentleman turned around, she made an ugly face behind his back and laughed like a mischievous sprite.

"I am master in my own house, anyhow!" cried he good-humoredly. "But do you know what I would like?" And he stood almost deferentially before his daughter. "That your mother could see you this evening."

And then he pulled out his huge red-silk handkerchief and blew his nose so that it shook the girl's ears like a trumpet-blast, than hurriedly returned the handkerchief to his pocket and went off whistling: "'So we live! So we live!'"

"He is quite touched," said Theresa, again surveying herself in the mirror. "Does the body fit?"

"I believe so. Good-night, Theresa, and much pleasure to you."

"Stay ; the carriage is not here yet."

"I must go home. Good-night."

At this moment the maid came, and she held something hidden under her apron. Julia heard her whisper: "This evening there were two letters in the office, Miss Theresa," and saw how the finely gloved right hand of the fair, lovely girl hurriedly snatched two yellowish letters and threw them into a little box of Japanese lacquer-work that stood upon a small table made out of bamboo-cane and silk-plush.

Julia well knew those letters; they were from Fred. He always wrote upon that expensive perfumed paper. Theresa had turned her back to her, and did not move either when her friend left the room; but Julia saw in the mirror that her fair countenance was disfigured by an expression of ill-humor.

CHAPTER IX.

GOOD COMRADES.

Julia went home, disconsolate, from her visit to Theresa Krautner. She was disposed to feel very angry with her friend, but reasoned herself out of the feeling. Her spirits were, however, no better. Stealthily as a thief, she crept up to the only corner that she could call her own, viz.: the little chamber under the roof. It was quite dark here, but, in spite of that, she found her way to the old arm-chair, and shivering, curled herself up in its depths. Pitilessly the rain poured down; she could distinctly hear the pattering and splashing of the water upon the tiles, but the roof was good and strong, and not a drop came through.

Here she was hidden, here she could give herself up, undisturbed, to the gloomy, rebellious thoughts that were mastering her soul to such a degree, that she was shocked herself at the contempt of mankind and consuming bitterness that preyed upon her, and which were not to be exorcised by any sweet memory, or hope of future happiness. For months had this hope helped to brighten for her the forlorn and

empty present, but now her heart refused any longer to stay itself upon a little bit of happiness.

She sat there, with clenched hands, wholly absorbed in her misery, and suddenly a sob escaped her.

Then a voice said: "Dear me, what is to pay, that you sit here moping so? You will surely freeze to death."

"I never freeze," said she, defiantly.

"Jule, I believe wonders of you, but not that," answered the doctor, good-humoredly. "Do you know I have been waiting for you a full quarter of an hour in Aunt Rika's room? I was anxious to have a talk with you before I left, but it seemed that you never would come! At last, I happened to think of this so-called studio. Where are you, though? Give me your hand and lead me down-stairs, it is fearfully cold up here."

Feeling after it, he had caught her hand and now drew her arm under his own.

"Come!" said he, "Guide me. I cannot find my way in this dark place."

"What do want of me?" asked she, and her voice had a dry, hard sound.

"Do come away, first—I 'll tell you as we go along; I haven't much time, I can tell you, child, for I am— I must go."

"Oh, yes—to the ball! Pardon me, I forgot?" and she withdrew her hand.

"You want me to break my neck, I suppose, since you let me go?"

"Oh, no!" And a match kindled beneath her

fingers, with which she speedily lighted the stump of a candle.

"There, now you can see."

She went in advance, lighting him out of the garret on to the steps.

"You were in a great hurry to say something to me, I think you said," remarked she, without turning around.

"I wanted to ask you whether it would not be agreeable to you, if I should ask you to sacrifice a few hours of your day, to helping me a little in my work—to speak to the point, if you would do the honors of my reception-room during my office-hours? When I am not there on the spot, it frequently happens that the patients grow restless, or the women excite one another by foolish tales of sicknesses. You see, I need for the place a person with friendly manners, much tact and tenderness of heart; all of which qualities you possess, Mischief, and therefore, I wanted to ask you."

She stood just upon the landing of the narrow old garret stairs, the small lantern lighting only a small circle immediately around her, but it sufficed for the man to perceive the rapture that shone in two dark, glowing eyes.

"Oh, how gladly I'll do it?" said she, and not a trace of melancholy was any longer discernible upon her smiling countenance.

"Good little girl," murmured he, touched by her ready compliance. "Do you really think you will do it?"

"You cannot imagine what pleasure it will give

me, Fritz, but—how about aunt? I must cook you know."

"All that is arranged for, Julia; aunt will hire a maid again."

"Oh, no, that cannot be!" cried the young girl, anxiously, "really not, Fritz! Ah, you do not know how—"

"I know everything. Please ask no more questions. So, it is understood: You will help me?"

"Yes, certainly I will."

"Then, come to me early to-morrow, but before office-hours, so that I may give you a few hints for action. And, now, good-bye, to meet again soon."

"'To meet again soon!'" repeated she, in hardly audible tones, and followed him with her eyes, as he ran rapidly down-stairs. He had not once given her his hand, but she did not observe it; she was too happy in being allowed to render him assistance. What cared she about the ball or Theresa? She could work with him and for him, which was a very different thing from dancing with him.

Like a bird she flew down the steps and into the room to Aunt Rika.

"Oh, how good you are, aunt!" said she, frevently, stepping up to the old lady, who sat knitting by the lamp on the center-table, looking even more out of sorts than she had earlier in the day.

Aunt Rika shrugged her shoulders.

"One cannot refuse the means for making an honest living," said she, bitterly.

"Oh, no, aunt! I mean to let me go down and help Fritz!"

"Well, that is precisely what I mean, too; or, do you imagine that he would have you do it for nothing?"

The girl had suddenly turned pale to her very lips.

"He proposes to *pay* me for it?" asked she, unsteadily.

"Of course, and very properly, to be sure!"

"But, I *will* not!" gasped Julia, indignantly.

"Why not, then, may I ask? Have you anything to give away? If the doctor, who has just become the rage, wishes you to receive for him—be he Fritz or any other—makes no difference to you, that I can see!"

The color went and came quickly upon Julia's face.

"Then, *you* take whatever I earn," said she, at last, "and never tell me when he gives it to you or how much—I cannot bear it?" And, turning away, she left the room. *She*—she his paid employe! He would never have ventured to ask such a thing of her if he really loved her!

In mute anguish she wrung her hands; and thus she sat, by her bed-side, half the night through, unmindful of how cold the room had become, her proud young heart seeking to compose itself. And ever and anon she fancied that she heard strains of violin-music, and saw airy gowns, embroidered with silver, flitting before her eyes, and a head crowned with shining, golden hair, wherein flashed and sparkled a little star. "She must have everything that is the fashion," Alois Krautner had exclaimed.

Well, Dr. Fritz Roettger was just now all the rage. Had not aunt said so?

"Good little girl!" was forever sounding in her ears, in waltz time. His clear, bright eyes looked forth from the confusion of whirling couples that danced before her eyes, and in them she read: "Do you not know, Mischief, that I mean well by you?"

"Yes," whispered she to herself, "I know it! I know it! Up to this time you have been the only human being to show me affection, and therefore my whole soul cleaves to you. Wrong me not, for pity's sake! It would kill me! I cannot bring myself to picture how it will be if you do not love me. Dear Heavenly Father, deign to put love for me into his heart? He must love me, else I care not to live!"

That last utterance sounded very like a stifled shriek. But there was no one now to hear it, and the agony and passionateness of her grief died away, unheard and unsoothed.

In the dazzlingly bright assembly-room, at this hour, an incredible number of cotillion favors decorated the doctor's black coat. Yes, he had come to be quite the rage. And, at the very last, a fair beauty, in light blue, tripped up to him and, with smiling face, presented him the last favor, when he flung his arm about her waist and glided with her over the polished floor. And seated beside Minna Roettger, who was watching the couple with proud satisfaction, Mr. Alois Krautner slapped his knee with his hand and laughed.

"Handsome couple, neighbor! Very handsome

couple!" he cried. "They have grown up like two Thuringian fir-trees." And then he took a survey of his own short, fat figure and his neighbor's angular shape, and gently nudged her arm with his elbow. "Where did they get it, think you? Not from us two. My dear lady, assuredly not. But come, the music has wound up. Take my arm, Mrs. Roettger, and let me have the honor of drinking a cup of coffee with you."

And, out of love for her Fritz, Minna smiled at the anything but flattering candor of "the old clown," and lay her hand upon his arm with great dignity.

Midnight had long since passed when the doctor silently escorted his mother home. Arrived there, he threw the whole glittering array of favors into the waste-paper basket. Only one single little star lay next morning on his desk, just by his letter-paper.

And upon this star fastened the eyes of Miss Mischief, who, with head proudly erect, stood by the doctor's side, listening to his instructions as to how she was to preside as the genius of the reception-room.

"And now, forward!" said he jovially, in conclusion, as for a second he took her right hand and shook it heartily. "Now comes our work, little comrade!"

CHAPTER X.

THE MATERNAL EYE.

"I do declare, Mischief, you were certainly born for your office," said the young physician to Julia, a few weeks later, when she had succeeded in so effectually soothing a crying child that had run a long splinter into his finger that he stood up bravely and had it extracted like a little man. "I hear your praises on all sides, from all sorts of people, young and old; and if I have any fault to find with you, it is only this, that you, who have the faculty of dispensing happiness around you, are so silent at home."

"Am I to talk to myself?" answered she, smiling softly.

"No; that is a habit, indulged in only by solitary and embittered people," he replied.

"Well, I catch myself at it anyhow, occasionally," she said, as if to herself, and the smile peculiar to her again lighted her countenance.

"There we have it, Mischief! You shut yourself up too much. You ought to be out enjoying yourself with other young people."

She lifted her long eyelashes and looked at him with so sad an expression that it touched him to the quick.

"Julia," said he, more urgently than before, "why do you go with Theresa no more? You used to be together so much."

"What should I talk with her about? We have nothing in common, and what we did have—" she suddenly checked herself, and left him to imagine the rest of her sentence.

"Then come down here, sometimes, of an evening. Mother and I are often alone."

"I do not know whether I would be welcome."

"Please, child, do not be silly!" answered he, pettishly.

"Perhaps it is silly, Fritz; but since I know that you pay me for my help, I have felt separated from you, as if a barrier had been raised between us, so high;" and she raised herself on tip-toe and held up her arm as high as she could.

He opened his eyes wide, and stared at her. She stood before him, pale and with quivering lips.

"Julia!" said he, with emotion, seizing both her hands. "Well, how am I to make it clear to you? Come, look straight at me! You cannot believe that I meant to hurt your feelings. Surely you know me better than that. The only thing that I wanted was to give aunt some help. You know how she is. She has an unbending pride, in spite of her pitiable situation, and I honor that high spirit of hers. I believe I should not be different myself. But that has no influence upon you, Julia, and—I

could not repay you for all your assistance, even if I would; that you know. Who in all the world could thus stand by me as you do now? Certainly neither my mother nor Aunt Rika. Verily, little Mischief, you indulge yourself in very idle fancies. If it is any satisfaction to you, know, then, that your so-called fee is a pious fraud, that simply helps me a little to deceive that poor tortured woman up yonder, for her good. In some way or other, I should support her, whether you helped me or not."

"Is that so? Tell me, is it true?" she asked, slowly.

"What, my child?"

"Why, what you have just said, namely, that I actually help you as no one else could do?"

"Yes, Mischief. Have I ever told you aught but truth?" He shook the hands that were withdrawn from him to conceal momentarily a glowing countenance.

"Then it is well; then--"

The rest he did not hear.

"Oh, you strange, silly child!" said he. "But do I not hear my mother call? Farewell, Julia. Do not worry yourself any more."

"No," she answered; "I shall think no more about it. I 'll believe everything." She went as far as the door, then once more turned back her beautiful head, and her dark eyes shone full upon him. "Now I could laugh at myself," said she. "I should have asked you directly, Fritz."

He opened his eyes wide. There was something in the look of that strange creature, that touched

him like a reproach, that reminded him of a spring afternoon, up in that little garret-room, where he had pressed a long and fervent kiss upon those beautifully curved lips. He gazed at the door long after she had disappeared.

"No, that is ridiculous! She loves me like a sister. Stuff and nonsense! I have surely said nothing to-day that—"

And after the lapse of a few minutes, he lit his cigar, and began to work at a scientific treatise upon nervous affections of the heart, and had presently forgotten that there were such things in the world as women's eyes.

As soon as Julia made her appearance in the front hall, Minna hailed her with:

"Good gracious, what have you found to chat about so long? The last patient left, too, long ago, and you might just as well be helping me to unpack the furs, for behold how the snow is coming down out-of-doors! It should have been done long ago."

And, without observing Julia's glowing countenance, she opened a small chamber next the garden, where were ranged trunks and clothes-presses, against white-washed walls. There she unlocked an old, oaken chest, whence, forthwith, issued a penetrating odor of camphor and naphthaline mingled with that of pepper.

"Look here," she began, while she knelt in front of the trunk, Julia standing by, "have you not noticed something?"

"What?" asked the girl, as she held aloft the Siberian-squirrel muff belonging to Mrs. Roettger.

"Well!" said the old woman, with a knowing wink. "I think I know who will be Theresa's choice, after all. Does she tell you nothing about her affairs?"

"Nothing at all, Aunt," answered Julia.

"If that's so, it is your fault," remarked Mrs. Roettger ill-naturedly, shaking her fur-collar so fiercely against the trunk, that a cloud of pepper filled the air. "K-t-chew!—what interest—k-t-chew!—have love affairs for you?"

"God bless you, aunt!" said Julia, and a roguish smile lit up her grave countenance.

"It was different in my time—k-t-chew! Dear me, it is horrible, this sneezing! When we girls get together we talked of nothing else but our beaux. But, it would be easy enough for you to turn the conversation on that theme when I give my next evening—Do you hear? For I must give one, and that right soon. You girls must try your fortunes with cards, and when you turn up knaves, and she turns red at the sight of one, then it is he—k-t-chew!"

"God bless you, aunt!"

"I'll give my party before the Krautners get off. Maybe you don't know that the old man has a cough; day before yesterday they had Fritz called in. Theresa stands to it, that her father must go to the south, the sooner, the better. Well, why not? They have the money. One thing I know: I 'd be right sorry for the girl to come back from her travels, married to some tricky foreigner—I know how it used to be at Monte Carlo, when the whole place

was full of fortune-hunters—and at Wiesbaden, too, when *roulette* was all the go. Marry one of that stripe, and then comes misery."

"No, aunt, *she* is not going to come home, married abroad," said Julia, in a tone of firmest conviction.

"You are right, now," chimed in Aunt Minna. "She has too much good sense, you think." And the old woman edged up closer to Miss Mischief and whispered into her little rosy ear, with an advance toward intimacy never shown before. "Do you know, I believe Fritz and Theresa are fond of each other, and— Heavens! What is there to laugh about, you silly thing?"

Julia had, in truth, laughed so heartily, clearly and merrily that it made the bare roof echo again. And now she blushed.

"Oh, dear! Aunt, pardon me," she begged.

The irritable woman grumbled but kept quiet.

"Yes, auntie, I 'll turn up knaves, too," promised Julia, now, with a sobered face, although she was secretly laughing for very gladness of soul.

Dear, dear; if the old lady only knew what *she* knew, namely, that Theresa had long since made her choice, and that the doctor—the doctor—

"Just so—and you must help me, besides, with my company."

"Of course, with pleasure, aunt."

"And Rika must lend me her coffee-spoons, else, with so many ladies (the young girls are to be invited as well), there would be too much washing-up to do."

Julia turned pale

"Ah—the spoons! Why—don't you know?"

"What am I to know? They are not to be had, I suppose?"

"I don't know. I believe—"

Minna reddened with anger.

"Sold or mislaid?" she screamed.

"Sold, I believe," stammered the young girl.

"Well, that beats everything!" cried Mrs. Roettger, passionately springing to her feet. "If my poor, dead parents knew of such happenings, they could not rest in their graves! And all for the sake of you two, who were rained down upon us without a spark of claim, only because that silly creature upstairs fell in love with your father and wanted to marry him. The whole of that fine property, that belongs to Fritz by rights, to have been fooled away and squandered by Lieutenant Adami! I just wish I had carried out what I meant to do in the first instance, and had had this feeble-minded individual clapped into a lunatic-asylum!"

The young girl turned pale and leaned against the door-post for support. She returned not a word to this outburst of hatred but instinctively turned to flee, when the infuriated woman shut to the lid of the trunk with a bang that resounded like a cannon-shot through the length and breadth of the house, and again her voice was raised:

"And you—you good-for-nothing thing, you—"

Julia was out in the hall. She did not know herself how she got there, and found herself on the same little bench in the corner beyond the steps

where many a time, when a child, she had taken refuge and doubled up her little fists in impotent rage. To-day, too, she trembled in every limb, but her heart stood still when the doctor's door was suddenly opened and his quick steps were heard on the flagstones.

"What, in creation, is the matter?"

Usually, his appearance was all-sufficient to silence Minna; but the loss of the family silver had converted her into a raging lioness. In almost screeching tones she informed him of the horrible fact—that the heavy silver coffee-spoons were lost—those that had on them the coat of arms of her mother, a born "von," the sole pride of the Trautmanns—and this only on account of these vagabonds!

"Pray compose yourself, mother. That is no reason for getting so excited."

Her son's voice was so frigid that the old lady's high temperature sank as suddenly as if she had been dipped into one of the cold baths by means of which he was wont to reduce fever in his patients.

Minna seated herself on the trunk and began to sob.

"You take everything so easily," lamented she. "You never think of the future; but you must admit, it will be no little thing if some day one finds oneself saddled with such a burden."

"What burden?"

"Why Rika and Julia to be sure! It will do, so far as Rika is concerned; she is my sister; but, that Julia, that—"

"Do not worry yourself, she will never be a burden to you."

"How so?" Minna had ceased to weep, and this "How so?" was hurled out in a tone that was again decidedly combative. "What do you expect will become of her?" queried she.

"Why, to begin, why should not she, some day, become a happy wife, like a thousand other girls?"

A mocking laugh from the old lady accompanied his answer.

"Well, I declare, I should like to know who will be stupid enough to take her! Just as little as you would take her, will anybody else have her! Or, have you, perhaps, plans for the future?"

The ringing of the front-door bell was now heard, and cut short the doctor's answer.

Julia sat, unseen, in her corner; with beating heart, she leaned her dizzy head against the dark wainscoting of the steps. She heard, without rightly comprehending it, that the doctor was called to come quickly, very quickly, to a patient, and directly afterward she heard brisk steps—his steps—that left the house; then all was still. Hereupon, she, too, arose, with a proud smile upon her lips, and yet with bowed head, and thus she went upstairs into Aunt Rika's sitting-room.

The old lady stood, pale and trembling, in the middle of the room.

"Has there again been an unpleasant scene? I heard Minna's voice even up here."

"Unpleasant?" asked Julia, shaking her head, as if in surprise.

Aunt Rika heaved a sigh of relief. The girl's pale face looked so placid, that nothing of any consequence could have happened.

But Julia went to and fro, attending to her little duties, as though in a dream.

Several times she repeated these few words to herself: "A happy wife! A happy wife!"

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE AND COQUETRY.

The great day had dawned upon which Minna was to give her entertainment. The house was kept in terrible commotion, until toward four o'clock, when quiet was restored. As soon as his office-hours were over, the doctor had taken flight, as well he might, seeing that both his rooms had been robbed of every chair. In the hall, the perfume of fine coffee mingled with that of fresh flowers. A modern kerosene oil-lamp shed its rays from the big old lantern under the roof. Louise and Rika's little maid shone resplendent in white aprons freshly ironed and stiffly starched; and in the mistress's two rooms burned candles and lamps.

Minna herself walked from room to room, taking a final survey, stroking down the white damask table-cloth, scrutinizing with pride the silver sugar-bowl and cream-pot on the table, in front of the sofa in the best room, and congratulating herself upon her splendid india-rubber plants, that she dearly loved, and the leaves of which she had to-day wiped over with a little goose-fat. They shone as though freshly varnished; but the secret of the way in

which she accomplished this she carefully guarded, no matter how often she was asked how she managed to keep the leaves so fresh and luxuriant.

Miss Mischief, who had once more been taken into her aunt's good graces, just now made her appearance, in a pretty white apron, to do the honors as daughter of the house, in the front room, where the young girls were going to be served with coffee.

"Now, mind not to fill the cups too full!" was a caution that frugal Minna could not refrain from giving. "And see that Louise hands the waiter first, once to the *Bürgermeisterin* and next time to the *Frau Directorin.* Rika, of course, is as whimsical as ever, and stays upstairs."

"Yes; she thinks she does not know all the company, and she does not feel well, either; she is in such bad spirits."

"I never saw the time that she lacked for excuses," dryly returned her aunt. "She may rest assured that adopted son of hers is well and hearty, even if he doesn't write," murmured she, fretfully. "Listen! There 's the bell already! Are the servants at their posts?"

Julia made haste to welcome the first arrival; but when she got into the hall, she found that it was no guest who had come in, but the postman, who handed her a letter for her aunt upstairs. She examined it, sighing; for again it was not from Fred, and the old lady was so anxiously awaiting news from him who had been silent for weeks now. She hid the letter in her pocket, for there was no haste in presenting such a communication to her

grief-stricken aunt. It was only a bill, sent the seventh time from a great dry-goods establishment in Berlin, where the lieutenant had laid in the richest supply of underclothes that ever an elegant young officer had possessed.

Ah, what an oppressive atmosphere that poor girl had now to breathe! Whatever phantoms of the imagination could torment the brain of a solitary, embittered human being, now haunted the old woman in her care for the only being in this world whom she really loved. Sometimes she saw her idolized adopted son sick in a hospital; sometimes—and that was the most horrible idea of all—she saw him goaded by despair into leading a wild, vicious life, and then she would cover her face with her hands and implore the Almighty not to let her live to see that day. Twice had she sent registered letters to him; early, yesterday, she had telegraphed besides, with money for reply. But Fred kept silent.

And Julia was forever speaking words of comfort to the old lady, and bore scolding and fault-finding with meakness. She would have dearly loved to say: "Do not make yourself so miserable over Fred's future, for he is secretly betrothed to Theresa Krautner!" But it was strictly forbidden her to speak. Who knows what mischief she might do by telling? And so nothing more was left for her to do than to write to him, on her own account, and urge him incessantly to let them have news of him.

She was about to return to the parlor, when there came another ring at the bell, and in came Theresa

in a light opera-cloak trimmed with fur, a becoming white hood setting off the roses on her cheeks. She entered at the stroke of four, the hour fixed for the assembling of the guests.

Julia welcomed her and showed her into Mrs. Roettger's chamber, where the ladies were to take off their things, and upon removing her wraps the toilet of the charming guest proved to be as elegant as ever. This evening her gown was of rich, dark-green cloth, trimmed with narrow gold lace.

Suddenly it occurred to Julia that she would ask Theresa about her brother, and she whispered timidly:

"Ah, Theresa, do tell me how Fred is. Have you heard from him lately?"

"Why?" was the brief rejoiner; and, after awhile Theresa added, as she re-arranged her bangs: "Really, I do not know."

Then she picked up her little gold-embroidered "Pompadour" and prepared to quit the room.

Julia could not follow, because other ladies were coming—ever more ladies—and when, at last, she did get into the parlor, whence issued the humming like as of a swarm of bees, Theresa was to be seen ensconced on the sofa, the centre of a circle of young girls; and there was no possibility of having any private talk with her.

The young ladies of Andersheim were a wonderfully good set, stitching away on their Christmas gifts as if they had their living to make by it. Theresa alone seemed to be merely toying with her crochet-needle, which she held idly in her hand,

while she listened attentively to the bits of gossip that flew from mouth to mouth. Her eyes evaded the pitifully pleading looks of Miss Mischief. Only when Julia passed through the room she scrutinized thoughtfully her tall, graceful figure in the tasteless cashmere gown which had served Julia as her best from her confirmation up to the present time.

"But she's pretty, though," said the young lady next Theresa, a fresh brunette with clear brown eyes. "I have, somewhere, seen such a face in a picture, but cannot tell whether it was at Frankfort or Berlin. A girl carrying a vase with handles, on her head, with features just as proud, yet gentle as hers. What superb eyes she has!"

"I don't know," answered Theresa. "Beauty of that sort leaves me cold, if beauty it may be called. She is not my style."

The other smiled good-naturedly.

"I should like to know," she went on, teasingly, "whether Doctor Roettger thinks the same of her as you do, Theresa? If I were in his place, I should be over head and ears in love with her."

Theresa Krautner shrugged her shoulders

"Possibly you might."

The young lady made a comical face. She was the only engaged person in the party, and was kept informed of all the news going, by her betrothed; and, by virtue of her position, she could sound Doctor Roettger's trumpets, without her motives being suspected.

"How you all did pay court to the poor man at the Casino ball," was her final thrust. "And which-

ever of you becomes his choice is not to be envied, for she bids fair to be pursued by a goodly amount of jealousy."

Theresa looked contemptuously at the speaker.

"I did not know—" she began.

"Oh, you were in it, too; you were only too well pleased to bestow a favor on him!"

Theresa was relieved of the necessity for reply; for, outside, the front-door bell rang, and the doctor's voice was distinctly heard to say: "Give me a lamp, please." He had returned home earlier than had been expected. And then again they heard quite plainly the words: "Ask Julia, please, to step across here for a moment."

Miss Mischief, who had just modestly placed her chair in the circle with the other girls, immediately got up and proceeded to the door. Arrived there, it seemed to her as though something compelled her to look across at Theresa, and when she turned her head, with the door-knob already in her hand, she beheld a pale face, with firmly compressed lips, and eyes that flashed upon her a glance too inimical to be misunderstood. She returned a look of astonishment and then went. What in the world had so changed that Theresa of late?

When she entered the room across the hall, Fritz came quickly to meet her.

"Say, Julia, have you got any word from Fred?"

"No," she answered.

"Then he has come in person. Of course, I may be mistaken, but I would lay a wager that he passed me just now at the railroad station."

"That can hardly be, Fritz. He is not coming, you know, until Christmas, and it lacks three weeks of that."

"I may be in error, my dear, but wanted to tell you my impression anyhow. And if it should be so, Mischief, have you an idea what brings him here?"

She blushed and was silent.

"Are you in his confidence?" he asked.

"Yes, Fritz."

"Well, child, if you have any influence over him, then see to it that the poor woman upstairs is subjected to no new excitements; it would not only be in vain—seeing that she can render no further assistance—but her corporeal condition is such that it cannot bear much more strain."

She had dropped her head.

"Is it as bad as that?" asked she, with feeling.

But before he could reply, there resounded from the ante-room his mother's voice in tones of lamentation; exclamations of sympathy were also rife, the door flew open, and on its threshold stood Mrs. Roettger, with one arm flung around Theresa Krautner's waist. That young lady's face was pale and distorted by pain. With incomprehensible awkwardness, she had stuck the crochet needle into her hand. The doctor, much shocked, advanced and led the sufferer to a seat. Minna whimpered as if she had to stand the pain herself; another old lady spoke of lock-jaw, and a third suggested that her father be sent for, until the doctor desired them all, without exception, to leave the room. Julia had

already hurried out to see to getting a basin of cold water.

When she came back with it, she paused an instant at the door, and a sudden dizziness seized her. The hook had been withdrawn, but Theresa's head lay, as though unconsciously, upon her helper's shoulder, and two big tears rolled down Theresa's pallid cheeks.

Upon Julia's entrance, the fair head was cautiously laid back against the pillow of the settee, and he did not wipe off the tears, either, as he had once good-naturedly done for Miss Mischief; he walked about the room, with an unspeakably pained expression of face, such as people wear who feel doubly the pain that they must inflict upon others. Julia hardly recognized him, so sympathetic and compassionate was he, so carried out of himself, on account of "a trifle," as he would have pronounced it in the case of any other.

"Did it hurt very much?" asked she, with sympathy in her tones.

"Of course it did," he replied, taking the basin from her to place it on a stand and mix the water in it with carbolic acid. "Please get some soft linen; you know—out in the press—to the right."

She went obediently, and when she came back, the roses had returned to Theresa's cheeks, and the little hand, that Fritz himself held in the water as tenderly as if it had been made of Sèvres porcelain, trembled no more. Afterward, while being bandaged, Julia held this hand. For the first time she received a reproof:

"Mischief, pray, not so rough!"

"What did I do?" she asked, looking up at him.

"You held the arm too firmly. Only see those two red spots?"

"Ah! Don't be angry!" stammered she, in her fright.

"Julia," begged Theresa, "bring me my things. I should like to go home."

"Let me escort you," said the doctor, eagerly.

And he put on only his fur cap, not taking time to get his overcoat. Nevertheless, the two stood chatting quite a while before Mr. Krautner's door. Once the young girl's laugh rang out so cheerily and loudly upon the night air that all who heard it said: "Surely, she must feel perfectly well again."

"Good night," said Theresa, as they parted. "I hope to see you in the morning, as the physician is in duty bound to visit his illest patient."

"You may depend upon me. Good night, Theresa!"

She extended her right hand to him.

"Good night, doctor!"

In the pale glimmer of the lantern that stood upon elegant cast-iron candelabra on the front-door steps, her lovely childlike face looked up at him so sweetly, and such an innocent, winning smile played about her mouth, that he, who never indulged in over-strained gallantry, bent down and reverentially kissed her hhnd. Then he turned around quickly and went down the steps.

Theresa hastily opened the house-door and, with light steps, tripped across the hall to her own room.

There, with her uninjured hand, she pulled off her mantle and hood, turned up the gas higher and stood in front of the mirror that rose in crystalline clearness above the fire-place. Thus she stood, smiling at herself with the greatest complacency, when steps were heard in the passage, and the door was thrown open at the same time that a sharp knock was heard. The girl thought that it was her father and turned around pleasantly to— At the same instant a low shriek of dismay rang through the cosy little room :

" Frederick !"

The man who had entered was indeed a spectacle calculated to alarm—pale, his light hair hanging disheveled about his forehead, and in his eyes, deep-set in an emaciated countenance, a dangerous light.

" I saw you come home just now," he began. " Times go well with you, I perceive, and I might easily have spared myself the anxiety that I have suffered on account of your persistent silence. But since here I am, I should like now to set off again only as your promised husband. You cannot blame me for this; and it must be more pleasant to yourself than these underhand doings. I beseech you, then, to go with me now to your father or have him brought here, so that the affair may be finally settled."

She had turned pale, and retreated into the deep window-niche, where stood the sewing-machine. The fright, his unqualified demand, the unpleasant consciousness that she had trifled with him, almost drove her wild with distress.

"Papa is not at home," she stammered.

'Then I'll wait for him."

rederick drew a chair to the fire-place.

"Shall we not have a chat?" he asked, with the same uncanny composure.

"Oh, please go!" Theresa now pleaded. "Come again to-morrow. I am not in the mood to talk now." She pointed to her wounded hand.

"Nothing was to be perceived of this a few minutes ago," he replied, not heeding her formal appeal. "I heard your laugh ringing through the whole garden; and that draughty spot, before the front-door, seemed to suit you very well for a talk. In here, though, it is much more comfortable; so, please, what you grant to a stranger, you surely will not refuse to your betrothed?"

While he talked, she had drawn nearer.

"I am alone in the house, and must once more earnestly implore you to leave this room!" She spoke with a voice quivering from excitement.

"Why so?" he asked. "We were alone in the summer-house, that time, when we engaged ourselves."

"You want to distress and insult me!" she cried, angrily, and the tears, that she had hitherto restrained with difficulty, gushed from her eyes.

Hereupon, he, too, advanced, and seized her hand.

"You do not believe what you say, yourself, my dear," said he. "You love me just as dearly as you did a few months ago, when you swore to me that,

in case your father would not consent to the engagement, you would go away with me secretly."

"No, no!" cried Theresa, snatching away her hand. "I never said that! You just fancy it!"

"Fortunately, I have it down in writing. It was in your very first letter, and this promise has always comforted me in these last few weeks of doubt. Say, then, Theresa, is your father still opposed to our engagement?"

"Yes, just the same. And—I—"

"You?"

"I have found out that he is right."

At these last words, she seated herself on the lounge and looked across at him, with the impatience of a woman who would like to have a painful interview cut short.

"Theresa, that is not true! You cannot—dare not be in earnest! You must have preserved your love for me! Your letters cannot lie! You are no ordinary girl! You are above narrow-minded prejudices! You will keep your promise to be mine, in defiance of the world, with or without your father's consent! Try to move him again, with goodness; and, if that fails, then let us burn the bridges behind us! There must be some spot upon earth where we—"

"Do you imagine," asked Theresa Krautner, with frigid composure, "that I am going to leave my father by stealth, and plunge into an uncertain and risky future?"

"Your father will come around by and by, and be reconciled."

"I have no fancy for romantic adventure," interposed she. "I find it more agreeable here than anywhere else in the world. In my eyes there is no spot equal to Andersheim. And, now, pray, go. After what has been said, it would be doubly painful to me if my maid should come in and find you here."

"No!" said he, passionately. "I am not going! You have an account to render me! You have cost me all the tortures of hope deceived—nay, despair! Speak, now! Why this sudden change?"

He had drawn nearer, and laid his hand threateningly upon her shoulder.

Then she jumped up, beside herself.

"Papa! Papa!" she called, rushing out of the door.

And heavy footsteps sounded in the hall; they came across; and ere the shocked man could collect his faculties, Mr. Alois Krautner stood before him, whose smiling face, when he caught sight of the officer, was as suddenly darkened as when a black cloud passes over a sunny landscape.

"What do you wish, sir?" asked the father, to whom his daughter clung as if seeking protection. "What is the cause of this honor?"

"I have already told your daughter that I wanted to speak with you," replied Adami, quickly recovering his self-possession.

"He wanted me to run away with him, and that I cannot do!" interrupted the weeping girl.

"No, no; of course, you cannot," said Mr. Krautner, coldly. "Trouble naturally comes of such

carryings-on behind my back. Drink a glass of water, and take out your cry when you are by yourself. You lieutenant, in default of the daughter, will be so good as to leave with her father; only, however, so far as to his own room. Here is the door. Take the lead, pray. I follow."

And the roly-poly little figure gave the precedence to the pale young man, with a bow that at any other time would have provoked infinite mirth; but to-night neither of the spectators was capable of appreciating what was ludicrous about Mr. Alois Krautner.

In the hall the cumbrous old gentleman stepped along as briskly as though he had invisible springs under his heels, and briskly opened the door to his own room.

"Pray excuse me a moment, until I have exchanged a few words with my daughter in private."

So saying, he screwed somewhat higher an old-fashioned oil-lamp, and then left the room, to return immediately again to Theresa's boudoir. The girl wanted to throw herself on his bosom, but, for the first time in his life, he repelled her.

"Excuse me, excuse me; this is no time for caresses! I only want a few plain answers to questions that I shall put. Sit down there. Well, then, in the first place: Did you, in spite of my prohibition, engage yourself to Lieutenant Adami last spring?"

A long pause, then a sob.

"Yes or no?"

"Yes, but I—"

"No excuses, please. Have you exchanged letters with him?"

"Yes, yes—but I—already—"

"Did you promise to be true to him?"

"Yes, but—"

"Quietly! And, now, have you changed your mind?"

"Yes."

"Why so?"

"Ah, dear papa," sobbed Theresa, who now saw a chance to touch her angry father's heart—"dear papa, because I could not bear to deceive you any longer—because I have learned to know that you only want what is for my good."

"Very well, very well; we 'll talk about that later." He scurried out of the door and returned to the lieutenant.

CHAPTER XII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

In that elegant villa there was one room that presented a strange contrast with the magnificence of the rest. It lay apart from the others, next to the street; had two medium-sized windows, without stylish curtains; only across their tops, from a plain board, hung a straight strip of stuff, trimmed with ball-fringe. The pine floors were scoured until dazzlingly white, and the stove was a yellowish china one of uncommonly ugly shape.

Here stood an old-fashioned couch covered with black oil-cloth, and in front of it a heavy old table, also covered with oil-cloth, fastened on with brass-headed nails; here hung on the wall, in a black, oval frame, the portrait of a woman with a child in her lap; there was a shelf, piled up with pipes, in one corner; and in the other a cherry-wood secretary; and here stood the easy-chair in which Mr. Alois Krautner had taken his afternoon nap ever since he had set up housekeeping as a young master builder, with his Hannah by his side. In a word, it was the private apartment of the master of the house, the only one in which he felt perfectly at

ease, where he could go in his shirt-sleeves in summer and in gown and cap in winter, making himself comfortable in his own way; where, every day, he was reminded of how he had risen, from a bricklayer's apprentice, to be a highly honored citizen. This room was his sanctuary, where he held praise-service to God in a peculiar fashion; his temple of memory, for every piece of furniture had been used by his blessed wife in common with himself. At that table they had taken their first meal as young married people, and on that sofa they had sat when he would come home of an evening, tired and worn out with work. And in that press had been laid away the first dollars saved, with a rapture compared with which consciousness of later wealth paled like a shadow.

And in this room now, Lieutenant Adami sat on the sofa. The situation was not quite clear to him. Hope *would* stir still in his heart. Suppose the father should yield after all! His self-conceit could not take in the idea that Theresa was really untrue to him. Her rejection assuredly came only from the shock of his unexpected appearance and his passionate urging of his suit! She *must* love him yet; the alternative was not supposable! If it were not so, then *all* was up. He saw a bottomless pit yawning. And so this affair could not come to grief, it *should* not!

He started up when Mr. Krautner again came in and then fell back in despair. Upon the old man's round face no good was to be read. Mr. Krautner took a chair, seated himself opposite his visitor,

drummed with his short, fat fingers upon the green flowered oil-cloth, and finally began, after clearing his throat:

"My girl has treated you badly; Theresa has flirted with you, as they say. It grieves me to find her at such tricks, for I always thought she would be as right-minded and true as her mother. Well, you see nowadays they are different, and anybody may go astray once. Had she written to you, when she came to her senses: 'Sir, I perceive that father is right. We are not fit for each other,' that would have done; but, as it is, I must say she is in the wrong. I know, for certain, at this minute, that no good would have come of it, if you had made it up between you. You must pardon her, lieutenant. Now, pray—pray—keep your seat," added he soothingly, as Frederick Adami, with ashen-hued visage, moved to go; "we are not done yet. I have something more to say to you."

The officer sank back again; the old man was silent, while his features twitched curiously.

"I know you better than you think I do, lieutenant," he continued. "In the first place, I have a little skill in reading men's character upon their faces, and in the second, I requested some one—a good friend of mine, say—to keep an eye upon your fortunes. Do you understand! Although I rejected your offer peremptorily, still I always counted upon the possibility that the girl might insist upon having you. I can only say that, after all, I am glad that Theresa has given up all thoughts of the match, because the accounts rendered me—so far as your

THE FAMILY PARTY ON THE LAWN.—*See Chapter VI.*

private life is concerned—were not exactly such as would recommend you as a husband for my daughter. With regard to the performance of your official duties, you were always spoken of with the greatest respect, and it were a pity for a good officer to have to quit the service on account of debt. That step is just ahead of you, lieutenant."

Adami sprang to his feet.

"How does that concern you, sir!" exclaimed he with quavering voice, as he picked up his hat, that lay on the table in front of him.

"Will you not let me finish what I had to say? Then I would say: We—that is Theresa—has done you a grievous wrong. Now, nothing is more hateful to me than to go around with a consciousness of owing a debt to anybody in the world. It would spoil the taste of my beer, disturb my sleep and, worse than that, spoil my pleasure in my own child. So I would beg of you now to have confidence in me and candidly tell me the amount of the sum that will cover your debts."

Again Lieutenant Adami jumped up with the same words as before:

"What concern it that of yours?"

And again Mr. Krautner pressed back into the corner of the sofa the young man who was wiping the cold sweat from his brow with a trembling hand.

"Of course, you do not know the precise sum. I pray you, then, write me word of the amount and the names of your creditors. I will go myself to Berlin and arrange matters; then that would be

settled. But now I have a stipulation to make: You are nevermore to assert any claim to the girl over there. You understand that? I must have your word of honor to that effect. Furthermore, I must insist upon it that henceforth you regulate your affairs differently and begin a new life. No more daily wine-parties; no keeping company with ballet-dancers, you understand—and cards, cards! This is a warning from a man who means well by you. Naturally, perhaps, it might be all one to me what becomes of you; but, you see—" He stopped, whistled a few bars of a song, then cleared his throat and continued: "I cannot get out of my head the old lady over yonder whom you call your adoptive mother. I was walking along the river, the other day, and met her. I had not seen her for a long while, and was utterly shocked at her wrinkled and careworn look. All on your account, lieutenant; for the sparrows on the house-tops whisper that for you she has given up all her money, little by little. Julia costs her nothing, for she stands by her like a brick and lives on crumbs, like a little bird. And then I could but think how I had seen her first—once when I, a stupid little 'prentice-boy, was sent over to yonder house to do a job of work. She was then a young and beautiful girl, such, I fancied, as the Virgin Mary must have been when on earth. But it is not only on account of her beauty that I cannot forget her, but because my father was killed that day. I had no mother even then, and when the people came and shouted down into the cellar —for we were building up a wall there—'Alois,

your father has been killed; they are bringing him home, dead!' and all began to lament and move off to look at the corpse, so that suddenly—poor little wretch that I was!—I found myself all alone in the cellar, then, all of a sudden, there stood that lovely young lady; and she took the poor little fellow in her arms, stroked his tumbled hair that was all powdered with plaster and cobwebs, and said, so feelingly: 'You, poor boy! Poor, poor boy!' And you see that—that—" He broke off, blew his nose, and went on, gruffly: "There, you know now—not for your sake, but— Well, the matter is settled. We 'll meet again in Berlin. See to it that you depart with as much privacy as you came. It is to the interest of us all that a dead silence be preserved. Good-night."

Then the door closed, and he had gone out of the room, leaving the lieutenant to find his own way.

He took up his hat and left the house, with compressed lips, furious, ashamed, and yet, in the secret recesses of his soul, with a feeling of infinite relief.

He walked past the old home-place in the darkness, along the stream. A candle was burning in his aunt's little room. A feeling something like pity came over him, but he promptly checked it. Let there be no sentimentality now; no humdrum commonplace life. A lieutenant's life, with eighteen dollars monthly in addition to his pay—never! And as he stood there, gazing upward, a resolve was matured within him. Africa! Out into a different world!

From the window of the railway coach he cast

one more glance across at the little town, and sought out the tower of the Krautner villa.

"Oh, that girl!"

He doubled up his fist. He had been really enchanted by that fair-haired nixë, and for it to end thus! And he had to submit to accept the kindness of that sentimental old fool, for there was no other way out of the mess. He lighted a cigar, and, as he inhaled its aromatic fragrance, the fierceness of his spirit gradually quieted down. To be rid of his debts was something not to be undervalued; and why worry over the other?

The next day, at noon, he sauntered very composedly into the casino, and took his seat at table; and two days later, at the same time with his resignation, he sent in an application for an officer's commission in the troop of German sharpshooters destined for East Africa.

"Why, how's this?" inquired his comrades. "We thought you were going to be married!"

He stroked his mustache, and answered carelessly:

"Positively, I am not fitted for a domestic character; that fortune will come soon enough." And then he drank off his mug of porter and said he must be off to the station to meet an old uncle, who had taken it into his head to see the wonders of the great city; so they need not expect him at supper that night. And the old uncle was Mr. Alois Krautner, who had come to help the lieutenant to settle his debts.

* * * * * *

About half-past nine the same evening that Theresa had been released from her engagement—the young officer had hardly left the Krautner grounds—Julia's slender form might have been seen issuing from next door. She bore a waiter holding a small plate of ice-cream and cake, and both were to be presented with Aunt Minna's love and hopes for the speedy healing of Theresa's hand. Julia came along the garden-path, where her brother's footprints were still visible in the snow, but she had no suspicion of his visit nor any idea that so significant a crisis in his life had taken place just here.

She entered the front hall, and as nobody appeared, she went across to Theresa's door and knocked. But no hospitable "Come in!" answered her summons. Then she pressed upon the latch and stuck her head in the door.

"May I come in?" sounded kindly in the ears of Theresa, who sat in one of the small chairs by the hearth, with her back turned to the door.

Now she jumped up, and Julia looked into a pale face and wrathful eyes.

"What do you want?" asked Theresa, brusquely, incapable, as she was, of hiding her agitation. "I am dead tired and want to go to bed."

"How you do look, though!" said Julia, not in the least offended, because she saw in her a sufferer. "Is your pain very great?"

"Yes."

Miss Mischief put down the waiter and turned to go, saying:

"Wait, Theresa; I 'll go after the doctor."

"I don't want him! For pity's sake, stay!" was shrieked after her; and Theresa pulled back her friend so violently by her dress that she tore it. "Excuse me," she stammered.

"Yes. What is the matter with you, Theresa? You are horribly excited."

"Go to father," murmured the fair girl. "Tell him he must come to me."

Julia went. She found Mr. Krautner in his room. He sat in the arm-chair at the window looking out upon the dark, snowy garden.

"What would you have, little daughter?" he asked softly, in a voice that sounded quite different from usual.

Julia delivered Theresa's message.

The old man did not reply immediately.

"Tell her, if she wants me, she can find her way to me," he then said. "The child is to come to the father, not the reverse. Alas! I have put off making this clear to her in times past. From this day on it shall be different."

And when Julia looked up at him, wonderingly and questioningly, he patted her on the cheek.

"She has felt the need of her mother—her mother—child, and the old man has looked too tenderly upon the only thing left to him and worshiped his daughter like a Christ-child. It has not done well—not done well!" And he shook his head.

"Are you not coming?" asked Julia once more, in gentle accents.

He arose a little from his seat, then said again:

"No, I am not coming."

"Theresa," said Julia to her expectant friend, "I do not know what is the matter between you, but you are the child, go over to him and give him your hand."

Instead of making any reply, Theresa began to sob bitterly:

"Nobody will understand me. I cannot explain to anybody! Even when I am sick and miserable, nobody will pay any regard to me. I am not going —I am *not* going to him! He has treated me as if I were a culprit, and I'd rather run away and never come back again—never!"

And again she began to cry, until she fell into such a state of excitement that Julia flew across once more, to beg the old gentleman to come to Theresa, who seemed to be seriously sick.

Then he did come and stepped up to the trembling creature, who lay upon the sofa; carefully he spread the covering over her delicate form, and his homely face, usually so jovial, had a wonderful expression of grief and tenderness.

"Well, now, don't cry any more, as though the greatest injustice had been done you. Do you hear?" he blurted. "Take a lesson from this! Your mother would not have done anything like that. She was so truthful and straightforward. Be in earnest, child, in earnest, and—do stop trembling, else you'll be sick; it would be well, I think, to send for the doctor, so that he—"

Again she started up.

"Not the doctor!"

"Well, no—no!" said he soothingly. "There,

take a drink of sugar and water and go to rest ; I will afterwards sit by your bed until you are asleep. Julia will help you to undress, for I should not like the maid to see how excited you are."

Julia put the still trembling girl to bed, when the old man returned and took a seat by his darling, preparing to keep watch over her, like any mother.

Miss Mischief took her leave. Her eyes were moist as she cast one more glance back upon the half-slumbering girl, who was so lovingly tended. She did not know what had happened, but though it were the bitterest, sorest trial in the world, she who had such love bestowed upon her was to be envied.

Happy Theresa! Who has a father and a lover! And then she with difficulty suppressed a shout of joy. Ah, there was happiness for her, too! There at the Krautner's gate *he* stood and awaited her coming. His mother had certainly told him of her going out again.

" Well," asked he, coming forward to meet her, " How goes it over yonder, Mischief?"

" Well," answered she softly, " she is asleep."

He gave a satisfied nod.

Then they walked silently to the house. That little bit of the way was unspeakably delightful.

" Pleasant slumbers to you, little girl," he said, in the front hall, weariedly, with a suppressed yawn. Then he nodded to her, and disappeared in his own doorway.

" Good-night!" murmured she, as she went upstairs.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SUITOR FOR MISS MISCHIEF.

It is very hard for a young person to keep to herself the things that engage her affections, be they sad or gay. The impressions that such a tender creature receives threaten to burst her heart, and some sympathizer must help one to endure the alternations of rapture and pain that the victims of first love must undergo. Seldom does a mother become one's confidante; it is almost always a bosom-friend, who has a secret of her own to keep.

Such girlish friendship is beautiful to consider—always ready to console, to weep or laugh with one another, and always ready to discover miracles, where any other would see but the plainest prose.

Miss Mischief had no mother, and had never been able to inspire with affection the woman who had promised to supply her place. The self-contained child would never have dared even to hint at anything that touched her feelings, to one so cold and careworn as her aunt.

And Theresa Krautner could no longer be called her friend, for she had specially avoided any intimacy with Julia since her engagement to her

brother, and the latter was much too proud to sue for a confidence that was withheld from her. But she suffered severely from the lack of any friend to whom she could unbosom herself, for by nature she was clinging and affectionate, all her coldness and apparent insensibility being artificial—a residuum of the loveless youth that she had spent. The love-light in those marvelous eyes of hers was the only outward token of the genuine warmth of her loving heart; but those eyes were almost always vailed beneath their long, dark lashes. Aunt Minna, to be sure, called it coquetry when these eyelashes would be lifted and their owner look a fellow-creature full in the face. The radiance emitted from the young girl's eyes then was actually startling in its brilliancy, betraying deep feeling and quick sensibilities.

"Fortunately," Mrs. Roettger used to say, "she has no opportunity for exercising that dangerous artillery of the eyes, for she never sees any other man than Fritz, and he is used to her looks; they can't hurt him. One can live, you know, in the midst of the most beautiful scenery and take no account of it, having been brought up with it every day. Really, the girl has nothing at all about her that could be called pretty except her eyes. Her black plaits look as if they were woven out of sewing-silk, and her complexion is as yellow as the old lace with which my gown is trimmed."

And yet suddenly it was proved that those eyes had awakened love in the heart of one man, who wanted to marry their owner, cost what it might. Minna raised her hands in astonishment,

Miss Mischief herself had had no idea of the impression she had made upon a certain gentleman, who, it turned out, was devotedly attached to her. She had spoken, with her accustomed friendliness, to a sick man who had come almost every day to consult the doctor, with difficulty crossing the threshold of the reception-room, leaning on the arm of a servant. Perhaps she was even more friendly toward him than the rest, for at the sight of so much misery her heart overflowed with good-will.

Was there anything sadder than to be young, rich, intellectual and, at the same time, hampered in every way by a frail body? She, who, with all the repose of her movements, was yet peculiarly restless, who could not have stood it without running through the garden, down to the river, three or four times every day, and could row so skillfully in summer, with her soft and yet powerful arms—she could but feel the stronger compassion when she beheld a fellow-being who could only enjoy nature from a chair upon rollers.

But this sympathy of hers only brought the poor man the added misery of a wounded heart.

He suddenly fancied that he had found in that kind and lovely being what could reconcile him to life; and to-day, at noon, his mother had appeared and requested to have a private interview with Mrs. Roettger.

She was a widow, a proud woman, who had never condescended to associate with the Andersheim people, and had lived, with her son, in utter seclusion.

A very poor girl, although belonging to the old French nobility, she had become acquainted with Mr. Norban, just after her father had lost his last dime at the gambling-table and then shot himself in sudden despair. This, probably, led her to listen favorably to the addresses of a plain citizen and, as his wife, follow him to his beautiful villa on the Rhine. Fortunately, this was separated by a spacious park from the manufactory, because she did not care to be reminded that her husband manufactured "German Sparkling Wine," although it did give her some little comfort that Napoleon III., as the story goes, once sued for the hand of the fair widow Cliquot. But, nevertheless, she was a woman of character, and, moreover, a sorely tried woman. Her only son, her poor Alphonso, who gave promise of realizing her brightest hopes, had been a cripple since early boyhood. He had bathed in the Rhine, when much overheated, and been brought home lamed for life—a terrible stroke this for his mother, who, however, did not lose her courage. She sought to gratify every wish of her idolized son, giving him the most careful mental training, and when his father died of wounds received in the war against France—he had participated in that campaign as an officer of a reserve-corps—she became not only the sole comforter of the boy, but also a German woman. She could not forgive her countrymen for having robbed her poor boy of his father.

And this was the lady who came to-day to ask the hand of little Mischief for her beloved son.

For eight-and-forty hours she had combated

desperately this scheme against which her heart revolted. She had wanted to be all in all to her only son, and the thought of having to share his love with anybody else was horrible to her. But now she had submitted to the inevitable, and her only anxiety now was that the cripple might be scorned.

Minna's brain fairly reeled when she was told that Mrs. Norban had called, well knowing that that lady never visited the neighbors. Now she sat as stiff as a ramrod on the sofa beside her visitor, the slight, dark mustache on whose upper lip she had never before been near enough to see, and the sight of whose fur-trimmed velvet mantle completely turned the head of Mrs. Roettger.

"In short," said Mrs. Norban, "Alphonso loves this young girl, and what he has to offer her is not insignificant: Fortune; in case of his early death we would provide for her in the best manner; position; besides the grateful, devoted love of his good heart. He—"

She drew her hand across her eyes and wiped away a tear.

"Excuse me, dear madam," protested Minna, "but what girl is there who would not be happy if such a gentleman as your son— And will he *marry* Julia?" cried she, interrupting herself, again overcome by astonishment "—actually marry her?"

Mrs. Norban coughed.

"Since I come in person to speak for him, I should think there was no doubt about the matter. The young lady's aunt has been pictured to me as

difficult of access, and that was why I turned to you, my dear Mrs. Roettger."

"Oh, dear!" she answered, as though some great, unhoped for gift had dropped into her lap. "What good luck for the child and my poor sister!"

"Pray, will it be possible for me to see the young lady herself?"

"What! You do not even know Julia?"

Mrs. Norban shook her head.

"Only through my son's description."

Minna hurried, as fast as her felt slippers would carry her, out of the room and up the steps. Julia was in the kitchen, stirring oatmeal porridge for Aunt Rika, who had really been made sick by her foster-son's prolonged silence, and kept to her bed, completely broken in spirit.

In spite of her noiseless step, Aunt Minna burst into the kitchen like a storm-cloud, red from excitement, and with trembling voice called out to the frightened girl:

"Be quick! Put on another dress! Wash your hands! There is someone down-stairs—" She gasped for breath. "Just make haste! Dress yourself nicely and behave sweetly! Do you hear?"

"And what am I to do down there, aunt?" asked Julia, quietly.

"A lady has fainted; bring a glass of water."

Minna herself judged this subterfuge to be extraordinarily foolish, as she rushed down-stairs, but nothing else had occurred to her. Still gasping for breath, she sat beside her visitor, when the door slowly opened and the young girl appeared with a

small waiter, on which stood a glass of fresh water. She had not changed her dress, for in her opinion, it was quite immaterial in what sort of gown one hurried to the assistance of a person in a swoon, and so she came in her scant, dark woolen print, her face slightly flushed from exposure to the heat of the fire.

Mrs. Norban, who had no idea that she was supposed to be in a swoon, picked up her eye-glasses and gazed in astonishment upon the charming vision that opened to her view. Yes, now she understood it all. She knew her son's glowing sense of the beautiful; she had cultivated it in him herself. And this was the creature, this blooming beauty, that he wanted for himself, poor fellow! She let her glasses drop, and her eyes fell before those of Julia, who was offering her the glass of water.

"I thank you, my dear."

"The lady is better already!" exclaimed Minna.

"Yes, but will you not sit down a minute?" continued Mrs. Norban, with a slightly surprised air, as Julia turned to go away again. "I should like," she went on, drawing the girl down into a chair at her side. "I should like to thank you. You do not know me, but I know you through my son."

"Yes, but I do know you, Mrs. Norban," answered Julia. "Your son had often told me about his mother."

"Did he do that?" asked she, flushing from pleasure. "He is a good man, and a noble-hearted one. I can say so, as a happy mother. You should read

his poems—will you? I 'll send them to you; his whole heart is laid bare in them."

Julia cast down her eyes.

"I shall be very glad," answered she, with some embarrassment.

She felt that the lady must have some particular reason for speaking thus.

"And will you come to see me? Yes? That is sweet of you. This afternoon, perhaps?"

"I am sorry, Mrs. Norban, but my aunt is suffering much more than usual to-day."

"What is that you say? Nonsense!" interposed Mrs. Roettger. "You can go and rest easy on that score. I 'll see after her; you cannot always be shut up nursing."

"You are a good child," said Mrs. Norban, rising to go. "Not to-day, then; but to-morrow I 'll take no denial; to-morrow I 'll send the carriage for you. And now, farewell—to meet again soon, I hope."

She had clasped both of Julia's hands, and a melancholy smile relaxed her full lips, when she noticed the sweet, childlike embarrassment that suffused the maiden's face.

"I 'll see you very soon again, my dear. Adieu, Mrs. Roettger."

She went to the door. Julia stood still, as though rooted to the spot, but her aunt hurried after the departing visitor, following her across the yard as far as to her carriage. When she came back, the young girl was already on her way upstairs.

"Good gracious! Did any one ever behold the like of the stupid thing? She does not seem to be

even curious Wait there," Minna screamed, "so as not to give Rika a great fright!"

"Why, a fright?" asked Julia, pausing in her course.

The excited woman was at her side in a moment.

"Dear me, is your reason clean gone, or do you only pretend not to be aware of the great, good fortune that has befallen you?"

She caught hold of the girl's hand and thrust her yielding form across the threshold of Aunt Rika's door. Then, standing with arms akimbo, she called out to her alarmed sister:

"No, Rika—only to behold—just look at her, please! No, such a thing we never would have thought of, you—no more than I!— Bless me, I must sit down!"

The nervous, sick woman started up in her bed.

"What is it?" she gasped, faintly, and her eyes turned with horror to the pale damsel, upon whom there was just beginning to dawn a bodeful suspicion, that the thing in question concerned her own future.

"You need not be frightened, Rika, for an end will soon be put to your cares. Only think, this little simpleton is favored above all the other girls in this town; she has an offer of marriage—one not a hoax, either—what do you think, Rika? Alphonso Norban wants to have her!"

A low, tremulous wail made itself heard as these last words were spoken. Then it grew still as death. The two sisters fixed their eyes upon Miss Mischief, who still stood upon the same spot, drawn

up to her full height, her head thrown back and pale as a corpse. A scarcely perceptiple shudder shook her frame.

"That is not true!" finally burst from her quivering lips.

"Not true? Well, it is hard to believe; but it is true, notwithstanding. His mother has expressly commissioned me to talk the matter over with your aunt."

"But, Minna, he is—yes, he is—"

"Leave the room!" hastily exclaimed Minna, cutting short her sister's remark, and turning to Julia. "And you, Rika, hush up with that sentimental talk of yours! He is a sickly man, to be sure; but is he to have no wife on that account?"

"Not me, though?" now came from Julia's lips. She had remained standing, and now spoke calmly, and deliberately. "Not me!" she repeated once more.

"You will have to reconsider that determination," declared the inflexible Minna; "but I want to talk with you first, Rika. Leave, Julia."

"I should like to stay here."

"Let her stay," entreated the invalid also, throwing herself back on her pillow, with a sigh. "It is her affair, after all, and I would not have her think that I meddled in what she must decide for herself alone."

"What folly you talk, Rika! Are you waiting for the Grand Mogul, perhaps? As if anything like so fine a chance would ever come again to such a Polly Poor girl! For Heaven's sake, child, consider

what a position such a match will give you. You will be introduced into a very fairy-land. The poor man is daft about you, and whatever pleases him pleases his mother. Only consider how free from care you will be as his honored wife! You can make trips, see the world, have your own charming house, a box at the theatre in Wiesbaden and a handsome coach and pair. You will be cared for, protected and waited on like a princess; no earthly want can come nigh you, while otherwise it dogs your every footstep. Or do you think it such an easy thing to go through the world as a poor girl, driven continually from pillar to post? For there is no use hiding the fact that you cannot stay here much longer. If I were in your place, I could not have borne this long, to witness the consuming anxiety of your poor aunt concerning your future, unprovided for as it was. You ought to fall on your knees and thanked God that He sends you a way out of all this perplexity, and will afford you the opportunity to make up to that poor creature, in some measure, for what she has gone through for your sake." Here she pointed at the patient. "Only consider the question from this point of view, and I am sure you will come to a different conclusion."

During this discourse, Julia's head had sunk lower and lower, her arms fell down limp, and everything swam before her eyes; it was as if an ice-cold hand thrust her ever farther, farther back from clear, peaceful sunshine, into a dark, black winter, ungladdened by a single blossom; and yet she willed

nothing of the sort. She clung to that which had hitherto been her prop, clasping it firmly to her agonized bosom.

"Ah, I will do anything, everything to help aunt, only not that—not that!"

"Do everything? Pretty talk, that?" mocked Minna. "What will you do? Look out for a situation most likely? This will not be so easy to find. A good one does not go a-begging. And what would you do? Become a paid sick-nurse, maybe? Well, I'm sure you would do much better to wait upon you own husband; ther you would know what you would be doing."

"But I *will* not!" suddenly cried the girl. "Cease, aunt, I *will* not!"

"And why not, pray?"

"Because I cannot love him!"

"Well, nobody cares whether you do or not, for that matter. Is that your whole reason? Do you know that is altogether out of fashion; it is simply ridiculous—at least ridiculous for a person in your situation."

Slowly Miss Mischief turned her indignant glance upon aunt Rika. She *must* take up for her, must comprehend her, for, she, too, had kept faithful to her lover, and refused every other offer, even after he had forsaken her for another woman. "Help me!" pleaded her eloquent eyes. But quickly her eyelashes were lowered, for, from the wide-open, glittering eyes of the fever-stricken patient, an entreaty had penetrated to her heart, a vehement entreaty that was full of anguish. "If you only

could make up your mind to!" was written in them so clearly—oh, so clearly!

Then the girl turned off with a gesture that was full of contempt, and went out.

And now she sat in her own contracted little room, with her hands folded in her lap. What was to be done was not quite clear to her, only this one thing she knew: *He* would help her, he would say, at last, at last: "Be done torturing her; she is mine—mine forever!" If he would only come, though; he stayed out so long to-day.

Mrs. Roettger's voice penetrated even up here; she must be talking very loud and very eagerly. She had totally forgotten the midday meal. The matter of this suit had had the effect of a lightning-stroke, and turned everything out of its ordinary course.

Now the door of her aunt's room was shut to, and Minna glided over the hall; her step could not be heard, but only her continual grumbling. Then all was still.

The young girl at last reminded herself that the patient had not yet gotten her porridge, and made haste to carry it to her. Aunt Rika lay with her aching head buried in her pillow and would not eat; indignantly she rejected the hand that would have clasped hers.

"Go, only go!" said she. "I don't want to hear anything about your affairs. I have only one wish: I wish I were dead!"

Julia did not venture to speak one soothing word; she knew now that even this woman was angry with

her because she would not seize the very first opportunity that offered of ridding the house of her burdensome presence. She glided away, and from the hall window looked down upon the yard, wondering if he would ever come who was to protect her.

But the snow-covered yard was deserted, and the whole house was as still as death. Minna was no doubt trying to rest after the excitements and worries of the forenoon. Julia did not remember ever to have seen the woman so wrought up, so angered. What great difference could it make to her whether she, Julia, were rich or not? Then there arose before the girl's eyes the pale, emaciated face of the man who wanted her for his wife. Oh, how pale, woe-begone and stricken were those features! And a cold chill ran through her, an aversion that amounted to physical repulsion. Oh, that *he* would only soon return!

And suddenly she heard the bell down-stairs ring quite softly. He always came that way when he suspected that his mother would be asleep. The next minute she was on the stairs and ran through the hall into his reception-room. He was just pulling off his overcoat, and hardly looked at Miss Mischief, who stepped up to him, with pale face and hands firmly pressed together.

"Fritz," she began, "you told me (in the summer it was) if they wanted to do anything to me, I should find a protector in you. Now, please, please help me!"

"Come, Julia, it is cold here," answered he, calmly,

preceding her into his sitting-room. "To be sure, I'll help you if you need help. What has happened? Have they been scolding you again, you poor little thing? Have you broken a piece of mother's old china, or what else dreadful has happened?"

As he thus spoke, he took from his pocket a stethoscope and a roll of bandages, seated himself in his arm-chair before his table, and smilingly pointed her to a seat at his side.

"Well?" he then asked.

Julia looked him fixedly in the face, and it struck her that he looked differently to-day from usual—so much graver—and yet every feature glowed with a strange, unwonted light, and she had seen his cheek quiver so before when anything moved him very, very deeply.

Ah, she could read his countenance, if none other in the world!

"Well?" he asked once more.

"You must make it clear to your mother and Aunt Rika that I am in no case to marry Mr. Norban," said she, hurriedly.

He turned around and stared at her.

"Why, child, if I did not know that you were as sober-minded and rational a little body as ever lived, I should think your brain was slightly addled. Nobody in his senses would put such a proposition to you."

"But it has been put to me. Mrs. Norban herself has been to call on your mother to-day and asked for me for her son."

He laughed incredulously; but when he saw the

convulsive twitching of that earnest little face he jumped up and exclaimed:

"What a preposterous idea! Why, it is perfect madness! But compose yourself, child. I 'll set the matter right. And here comes mother? Well, be quiet, now, child, and do not tremble."

Mrs. Roettger fairly staggered back when she caught sight of the young girl.

"Well, I hope you will explain the situation clearly to her," she said pettishly.

"I have done the best I could by assuring her that I should regard it as a perfect shame if she should marry a walking corpse for the sake of bettering her fortunes. Luckily, she seems to have no such intention."

He had spoken very quietly, moving a few pamphlets from one side of the desk to the other, and continued:

"I shall go to see Mrs. Norban myself presently, to thank her, in due form, for this offer, remarking to her that I am ready to continue treating her son, but *not* here—rather at her own house; and, in case he desires a nurse and companion, he need only advertise in some paper that has a large circulation. Hundreds will be glad to take the place. That were the best way out for us both. Had you something else to say, mother?"

No, Mrs. Roettger had nothing more to say; nor would she have been able to express her opinion if she had tried to, so utterly confounded was she by her son's emphatic declaration. She silently left the room, and, for awhile, the two remaining heard

nothing but the jarring of the old woman's chamber door, as she slammed it to. Then a low sob—Miss Mischief had hidden her face in her hands and, while her frame was shaken by a nervous tremor, she uttered detached and unintelligible words. Shocked, he sought to quiet her, for he had never seen her weep, even as a child, and in earlier days had often wondered at the stolid composure of the constantly berated child. Now, this outburst of passionate grief touched him unspeakably; he bent down nearer to her, the better to understand what she wanted; to ascertain what more oppressed her. He was touched by the sisterly confidence manifested in him by the poor little thing, so he gently raised her head and laid his right hand soothingly upon her hair.

"Julia," he implored, "compose yourself! You know now that the matter is settled. You see, that poor, sick fellow displayed a goodly amount of selfishness in asking you to marry him, badly off as he is. But you must make allowances for him; he has been spoiled by his mother and taught that he was to have everything in the wide world that he wanted. But this time he will find out that he cannot have his way, for my little comrade is not to be sacrificed for the gratification of such selfishness."

But still the tears trickled down from beneath the girl's long eyelashes. She grieved in prospect of what was now to come—the eternal reproaches, the life that, after this, would be yet more disconsolate than before; and the longing desire after a sure

retreat, after tenderness, after love, after the only heart that understood her, at this moment got the better of her. Her tearful countenance was uplifted, her hands intertwined, and her lips moved. He bent his ear to her mouth, in order to catch the meaning of this inaudible whispering, but when he did hear plainly and gathered the sense of her words, it seemed as though his heart would stand still from horror.

"Oh, do not let me be so utterly desolate again, Fritz! Tell them that you—that both of us—that we—"

He did not let her finish what she was saying.

"Julia," said he, aloud, standing up and bringing the girl to her feet with him, "Julia, consider!"

And seeing the red flush of shame that mounted to her cheeks, he drew her to him and said with quivering voice:

"Julia, my poor little sister, you are not forsaken, you never will be; and to prove to you how dearly your old playmate loves you, he will trust you with a secret," and he drew her down upon the sofa beside him. "I will tell you something that I would hardly have ventured to own to myself, even yesterday, and that I could not speak of to anybody else but you, my little comrade. Julia—I—"

He came to a sudden halt and jumped up. That was a horrible poison which he was about to administer as a medicine, possibly it might destroy life, and power of utterance failed him, although he told himself that this was the only physic that could effect a cure. But then he came back, resolved,

and took his stand in front of the girl, who sat in ghostly silence on the sofa, with an odd smile upon her lips.

"Julia, I love, and since early this morning know that my love is returned. I know you--you—too, will love Theresa dearly as a sister, as my wife—"

He had not realized what would be the effect! The face that met his gaze had a rigid, stony look, and an outcry smote upon his ear, so shrill and agonized that he thought he had never heard anything so bitter in his life.

"No," she had called out—"no, do not say that! Not Theresa! For pity's sake, say that it is not true!"

She knelt before him, in the abandonment of agony and despair. He never would have believed that the timid, maidenly creature, whom he had known from childhood up, could be capable of such an excess of passion as now spoke from her dark, glowing eyes, the tone of her voice and the trembling of her limbs.

"Julia!" he exclaimed, indignantly, retiring a step.

She did not rise.

"Fritz, I implore you! You dare not! She dare not! You do not know! Father above, it cannot be possible!"

Then a hard hand jerked her up.

"Do you forget all sense of propriety?" cried Minna, who had heard the girl's shriek out in the hall. "Fie upon you! Girls do not throw them-

selves at the feet of men in this country—you understand!"

And the tottering girl stood there, with her hands pressed to her temples as though aroused from a frightful dream, only to be awakened to a yet more horrible reality.

"Yes, shame upon you! But I have suspected, for a long time, that you were in love with Fritz, only I did not want to speak of it."

With these words, she again grasped Julia by the arm, in order to lead her away. But she caught at the air. Miss Mischief had sunk to the floor, speechless, and the doctor bore her senseless form to the sofa.

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Roettger. "Did I not always tell you that there was something awfully common about this girl?"

"Mother," said the doctor, feelingly, while he busied himself about the fainting girl, "if I did not know that you were not as hard-hearted as you seem, I should be wretched. Be so good as to hand me that ether and go for some wine."

"Well," said Mrs. Roettger, coolly, as she brought him the desired articles, "why should we be surprised? Her mother did precisely the same thing, and the apple does not fall far from the parent-stalk. I am only glad of one thing, namely, that I have had the opportunity to learn that you and Theresa have made it up, and are engaged. Your union with her will make my old age happy—There, she is awake again," she added.

It was so. Julia slowly straightened herself up.

With a mute gesture, she rejected the doctor's offer of help, and moved feebly through the room, to the outer door. A wonderful smile played about her mouth.

Upstairs, Julia lay still upon her bed. She did not clearly know what she had done; she only felt that something was different in her and about her. She pressed her hand to her heart, that pained her so sharply, and as she did so she smiled again. Nobody came to look after her. Who should do so, indeed?

A considerable time had elapsed since Julia, pale and trembling, had mounted the stairs, when Aunt Rika's little maid rushed into Minna's sitting-room. There, reclining upon cushions in the snug corner by the greenish-porcelain stove, was a fair, lovely girl, looking down, with beaming, blue eyes, upon the man, who held her hand clasped, and softly imprinted a kiss upon it.

"So when you return from the south, Theresa," he had just said, "then I may carry my suit to your father?"

"Yes," she responded. "I want him, once more, to enjoy travelling with me to the full, for, if he knew that it was the last journey that he and I would take together, he would be forever moping, and eye even heavenly Nice with melancholy. But," added she, lifting her slender finger threateningly, "do not be impatient, please?"

"I shall wait, as you desire it, Theresa. I am so grateful that you have at least devoted this evening hour to me."

Theresa looked at him in surprise. It was partic-

ularly agreeable to her that he did not insist upon gaining her father's sanction to their engagement, because she wanted once more to enjoy her freedom to her heart's content. But she had not expected to find it so easy to carry her point. And, moreover, the doctor did not even make the attempt to chain his happiness to him by means of gold rings and other tokens of betrothal. He sat as serenely and tranquilly there before her as might have done a man who had been married for years and had no occasion to worry himself over any possible miscarriage of his hopes.

"Are you not at all jealous?" teased she.

"'Jealous?' No! I always think jealousy is injurious to the one whom we love. It presupposes a lack of faith."

Instantly she bit her under-lip with her little white teeth, and then broke into a laugh.

And just now it was that the upstairs maid bounced into the room with disturbed countenance.

"Doctor, do come quickly, please! Miss Julia is sick and talks away all the time as if to her brother, who, you know, is not here."

He jumped up and ran out without excusing himself to Theresa.

"What is that about Julia and Fred?" inquired Theresa, restlessly going over to Minna, who had sat like a statue on the sofa in front of the table where stood the lamp, apparently so absorbed in her almanac that she neither saw nor heard anything.

"I do not know, my darling," answered the enraptured mother-in-law-to-be. "Very likely fever

makes her flighty in her talk; she was not well to-day after dinner."

But Theresa seemed to have no disposition to prolong conversation with the old lady, and silently paced the floor.

Then Fritz returned.

"She is very sick, mother," said he, addressing himself to that lady. "I believe that it is an inflammation of the brain, and so, until I can get a trained nurse, I shall have to ask you to stay by her."

"Is she out of her senses?" asked Theresa. "Oh, what a pity!"

And after his mother had gone, he folded his betrothed in his arms and earnestly looked her in the eye.

"Now come, I'll escort you home, for I must go back to the patient. But first, let me take leave of you. May we soon meet again, my blessing!"

He had moist eyes when he for the first time kissed her.

Once more, at the villa front door, he took a tender leave of her, fondly gazing upon her beautiful face.

"God bring you safely back to me!" said he, fervently, as he bade her his last fond good-bye and took his leave.

Up in the little sick-chamber, Miss Mischief, under the delusion of a fevered fancy, was carrying on a whispered conversation with her brother.

"Ah, Fred, we two!" said she, just as the doctor came in again. "Ah, Fred, we two! But you will forget it, you are a man—you have a thousand times

more, too, but I—I had only the one thing." And she wound up with a laugh.

"What is that she is always talking about with Fred?" whispered Minna, as she laid on a fresh compress of ice.

He shrugged his shoulders and quietly took a seat by the bed of his little comrade. And there he was still sitting when, in the early morning, the shrill whistle of the locomotive sounded through the window. It was the train that bore his beloved to the south.

Theresa reclined in a first-class *coupe*. The old gentleman fell asleep again very soon; he was always accustomed to sleep through the best part of a journey; but he had beforehand carefully enveloped his daughter in her traveling-robe and ensconced her little feet in fur-lined shoes, as she lay curled up on the opposite seat.

She did not sleep, though, but looked out with languid gaze into the gloom of a December dawn. But as day gradually approached, with a cold, gray glimmer, she felt chilly, and began to yawn. The world struck her as dreadfully prosaic; a feeling of *ennui* had been stealing over her ever since yesterday, and yet it had been the very day when she had reached the summit of her wishes, upon the gratification of which, as she supposed, the happiness and repose of her life depended; Doctor Roettger had avowed his love for her. Her anxiety was all wiped away, her ambition satisfied; and yet—She yawned again. How disagreeable these early starts were!

COUNCILOR KRAUTNER STOOD WITH HIS HANDS CROSSED.—*See Chapter VII.*

Half dreamily, she reviewed the events of that last day. Julia's sickness had come in the very nick of time. Otherwise, she might have blabbed; would have done so most probably. But, as it was, she suspected nothing; and if they came back in the spring, then— Well, many a thing would have happened between this and then. Anyhow, one could enjoy the carnival at Nice with an easy mind.

She leaned her pretty head upon the sofa-cushion, and once more congratulated herself that the man about whom all the single women in the town were raving was her sworn lover. And then she pictured to herself her future home. They could furnish that interesting old house stylishly, for its rooms were on such a grand scale. The large yard, with its outbuildings, would suit admirably for servants' rooms, carriage-house and stables. The grounds could be arranged to represent the yard of a mediæval castle, and be provided with a grass plot, a beautiful fountain, a sun-dial, etc. The garden (it had much finer trees than flourished in her father's grounds) and the gondola—no, several gondolas, for they must have fairy-like garden-parties—

The young girl's eyes closed. She was asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

SUNSHINE THAT MAKES DARK SHADOWS.

A spring day with its dazzling sunshine greeted Miss Mischief, when, for the first time after her sickness, she crept down-stairs to drink in a few draughts of fresh air. Like one dreading a fall, she held fast by the banisters; there was lacking to her a careful, supporting hand, such as she had been wont to extend to the convalescent, even the poorest; no, she had to trust to her own feet—if they had only not been so feeble. But, whom was there for her to lean upon? Aunt Rika was so badly off that she needed a prop herself, and Aunt Minna? Well, since the patient had been pronounced out of danger and been out of bed, that lady had hardly deigned her a glance. Since she had been eye-witness to that most "indecorous scene," she had given the trifling minx a wide berth. But Fritz? Fritz was as friendly now as he had been before—and yet—with a difference.

The young girl now moved slowly onward in the direction of the garden. In the broad, grape-vine

walk the sun shone full through the bare boughs, and upon the borders on both sides of the box-edged path bloomed yellow and blue crocuses and white liverwort. The breeze wafted the perfume of violets, and on all sides shrubbery and trees were budding into leaf.

The river was mightily swollen, and the meadow was under water. Julia saw all this as in a dream; the outer air having an intoxicating effect upon her who had not been out-of-doors for months. Suddenly she was compelled to lean against the trunk of the nut-tree; only as through a vail she still observed the sparkling of the waters and the awakening life of nature.

A flag, with prettily painted staff, had just been hoisted over the Krautner villa. Julia followed its movements with languid eyes. How merrily it fluttered over yonder! Nobody had mentioned it to her, but she knew this to be the signal of welcome for those who to-day came home from the south.

A sharp pang darted through the maiden's bosom. She told herself that this was the reason why Fritz, for the first time, had omitted his visit to the patient in her little room, because he had not liked to show his delight in her presence.

Angry at herself, she clinched her teeth and shook her head. What would she have? All was settled. She only wished that he might have the happiness in possessing Theresa that he expected. The hard time that must elapse ere she were perfectly well would be gone at last, and then she could leave this

house and stand upon an independent footing, and all whom she left behind would bless the moment when the door closed behind her. Oh, how sweet it must be to have a home with one's own dear father —a spot where you know that you are always welcome; where there are true hearts, open arms and hands to bless you—dear ones who would gladly share with you their last crumb! And now, well was it with a man like Fred? Yes, she wondered where Fred could be at this very moment.

One day, he had briefly communicated to his aunt that he was tired of humdrum life in a garrison; had sent in his resignation of his officer's commission, and volunteered for service in East Africa. As soon as this exchange was effected, he meant to come to take leave of her. And, to be sure, between Christmas and New Year he had been there about twenty-four hours and bidden his old aunt farewell.

Julia could not remember whether or not he had pressed her hand for good-bye, since then she was at her very worst. From that time, however, Aunt Rika had been utterly broken-hearted, all her thoughts being fixed upon him who was so far away, all her prayers offered on behalf of that dear, adoptive son, who following his adventurous spirit, would be murdered by the blacks, she was very sure.

Julia wondered if he had learned of Theresa's unfaithfulness; whether that was the cause of his turning his back upon Europe. If this was so, at any rate nobody besides Theresa and herself knew of this motive. For she had betrayed the secret of

their engagement to no human being. To what end disturb the peace of mind of him who was dearest to her? To what end reveal what would at once shatter the very foundations of a good man's happiness, unsuspecting as he was? And was not the thought of exposing Theresa's true character suggested by selfish, impure motives? Must she not be silent on the subject? Yes, if she had been his sister, all right; but now—now she loved him, and knew that she was instigated not solely by regard for his welfare but by something else of which she herself was ashamed, namely, a passionate bitterness and consuming jealousy.

Therefore she maintained a scrupulous silence; kept her lips sealed when he sat by her bedside on those days when consciousness was gradually being restored to her—when, with solicitous mein and a compassionate expression in his eyes, he would hold her quivering hand; said nothing when she learned from his mother that the doctor's betrothal would take place immediately after Theresa's return. She did not shriek out:

"The girl that you love is faithless, faithless to her heart's core! She only takes you as she buys a new gown—because it is the fashion."

She compressed her lips firmly and pretended to be sleeping, only that he might go, that she might not see his dear face. It was almost a miracle that she got well in the midst of such inward conflicts, that she was sufficiently restored to be standing here in the air and sunshine, gazing upon the banner over yonder fluttering so gaily in the breeze.

Julia followed every turn of the dancing pennant; and then, across the low wall away through the bare boughs she descried the coachman and the chambermaid who, amid loud laughter, were-fastening a huge wreath of flowers over the house-door. She saw Minna, in her own person, advance and present to those servants—as a special love-greeting—a pretty basket of flowers for Theresa's boudoir, no doubt.

Julia again moved slowly toward the house, her strength having failed her. Through the balmy air now came full upon her ear the clangor of church-bells; all three chimed in harmony as if some great festival were being inaugurated; but no, their sound was mournful. Julia recognized its significance now—some weary mortal was being borne to the grave, but one of those held in honor here below.

With difficulty she opened the house-door, it being of heavy oak, and came into the shady hall, just as Minna entered from the other side. The latter did as though she did not observe the pale girl; she went rapidly into the kitchen and, from the threshold, called out to Louisa:

"They are just burying that young Norban! What a pity that at least he had not left behind him somebody to inherit his wealth; as it is, there sits his old mother alone with all that money."

"Yes, yes," answered Louisa; "if Miss Julia had only taken him, what a rich widow she would be now and what an easy life she would lead! And what has she now?"

Miss Mischief smiled, as she toilsomely mounted the stairs. Yes, what had she now? Nothing—nothing at all! And yet she still had herself, and the consciousness of having done what was right and—pain about *him*.

In fact, Julia did not see Fritz to-day, for the first time. He only sent her up a few oranges and a book. He asked that she would excuse him for not calling to-day; he had so much to do.

Now she sat at the window, looking out upon the river and counting the ships that passed; and presently the sun went down in a bed of crimson clouds, and she said to herself:

"Now they must come!"

It was very quiet in the lower story, even Mrs. Roettger being apparently away from home. Perhaps they were even now celebrating their betrothal; perhaps already, when they were down yonder on the blue Mediterranean, Theresa had confessed to her father that she loved Fritz Roettger, and, at the same time, asked him if this was a son-in-law after his mind. And Julia fancied she could see the joy that spread over the old fellow's good-humored face and hear his hearty laugh as he answered, cordially:

"Why, yes, little daughter, yes; he is the kind of man to tie to. You have made a good choice."

Then Theresa had telegraphed—of course she had—and now the lovers were exchanging rapturous greetings, while Papa Krautner and Mamma Roettger were looking on with sympathetic smiles, and Fritz kissed his betrothed.

How violently Julia's heart began to beat, all of a

sudden! And "chirp," "chirp," went the starlings out-of-doors, flying blissfully together into their little nest. Down on the bank of the Rhine, Aunt Minna's maid stood by her lover, playfully splashing him in the face with a handful of water when he tried to kiss her. How the pair did enjoy the twilight hour, laughing and chatting together! And when Louisa at last turned to come home, with a basket of fresh spinach on her head, they called out to one another: "We 'll see each other soon again!" And soon afterward Julia heard the girl singing cheerily in the kitchen. Meanwhile, she herself sat there, utterly faint and weary, but still her face wore a placid expression, until the flush of sunset had faded into the monotonous gray of dusk, when down-stairs the door closed and Minna's brisk steps were heard approaching, to die away in Aunt Rika's room. Then she got up and went across the intervening passage. She wanted certainty, final certainty; for, to the very last, people will believe in miracles, even if they do not admit it to themselves.

The door was ajar, and she arrived in front of it just in time to hear these words of Minna's:

"And you would not believe how happy they both are! Like children, Rika, like blessed angels! And the old man is as happy as his daughter. The wedding is to be in May. Dear, dear! We have sunshine at last, after such a long season of trial!"

Aunt Rika said softly:

"I envy you, Minna! God knows I envy you!"

But Miss Mischief did not go in. On the other

hand, she went back to her room. All was still as a mouse in there; only once a sigh escaped her, and it was almost like a sigh of relief. And for the first time she slept again that night.

She had the certainty that she had longed after. Rest had come to her—the rigid rest of self-renunciation.

CHAPTER XV.

MISS MISCHIEF ENGAGES TO LEAVE HER OLD HOME.

With firm will one can do much, even toward getting well, and Julia wanted to be well. Nothing would have paid her to be present at the wedding, so she was determined to leave the house before that time. Nobody made any opposition to her going out into the world; circumstances had so shaped themselves that her presence was more than ever superfluous.

Theresa's desire to occupy the whole house alone was not to be gratified. Before Mr. Krautner could buy Miss Rika Trautmann's property in all privacy, it had found another purchaser, who was none other than Doctor Roettger himself. But dearly as he loved his promised bride, he was by no means to be induced to turn his mother and his aunt out of the home of their fathers.

"My darling," said he, earnestly, to Theresa, "mother and aunt will occupy the lower floor; mother in her old quarters, aunt in the three rooms adjoining my reception-room and office. I shall

have the door connecting them with mine locked up. Aunt shall hold individual sway in her province, I in mine. But above-stairs happiness shall take up her abode in those cosy rooms of ours, and nestle there with us undisturbed. Up there you shall reign like a queen, ordering your kingdom according to your own taste; below, everything stands just as it is."

No entreaties, no flattering, no cajolery were of any avail, and Theresa postponed her victory until after the wedding ceremony was over. She would carry her point yet, she thought.

The two old sisters were, henceforth, to keep house in common, and in the beginning of April, for the first time Julia put her hardly recovered strength to the test by helping Aunt Rika to furnish the chambers down-stairs, for upstairs masons, carpenters and all sorts of workmen were expected to put to rights the abode of the future Mrs. Roettger. Nobody asked Julia if she were not undertaking too much. Only Fritz said a single time, as he chanced to look into the room in passing, a bunch of blooming anemones in his hand, that he was carrying to Theresa:

"Do not exert yourself too much, Mischief. What will you do if you fall sick again? Are you still drinking your iron and wine?"

She nodded assent absent-mindedly, and he went on his way.

He spent every minute he could spare over at the Krautner villa. He avoided coming near Julia when in company of his betrothed; and in recogni-

tion of the pain that he had cost her, he treated her with greater consideration than ever before. Nevertheless, this very consideration cut Julia to the quick, and her pride revolted against it in silent wrath.

In the midst of the moving came Mr. Krautner, and regardless of all the confusion, seated himself sociably by Aunt Rika's side, on the sofa, which had just been set along the wall; quietly he observed how the pale, almost too slender girl worked, to make things comfortable about the old lady, so that she would not miss too much the old apartments to which she had been so long accustomed.

"Well, tell me about it, dear sister-in-law," for so he had called Aunt Rika since the betrothal. "Fritz told me recently that your little daughter, over yonder, is looking out for a situation."

"It is so. I am indeed looking for a place."

"Ahem! You will not have far to seek this time. Come to me, and I'll treat you like my own child. I cannot be left without somebody in the house with me. I must have somebody to give me a friendly greeting when I come home of an evening. And over and above, if Theresa goes away"—he snorted vociferously—"I shall hate it dreadfully to be left all by myself in our big house. How is it Miss Julia? Come here and tell me."

Aunt Rika looked at him gratefully, but in some surprise. Julia, however, said quickly:

"I thank you heartily, Mr. Krautner; but I should be too much spoiled at your house, which would not be good for me. I must make my own

living now, and 't were better done among entire strangers, and that far, far away."

"'Spoilt?' I spoil nobody; least of all you, Miss Mischief. And I am not making you a mere temporary offer, mind. I want it to be forever, until either somebody bears you away to your own home or until I close my eyes. And Alois Krautner does not forsake people in death either, understand."

She came over to where he sat, her lips trembling with emotion.

"Thank you, many times," said she, "but I cannot. I accepted a situation yesterday."

Aunt Rika flared up.

"And I not know of it?" she cried.

"I beg your pardon, aunt. I meant to tell you to-day, anyhow."

"Where are you going and what to do?" asked the old lady, putting on as much chagrin as if disrespect had been paid to the tenderest of mothers.

"I have engaged, in the first place, to attend a training-school for sick-nurses in Cologne."

"'Sick-nurses!' You, who would not even undertake to nurse your own husband?"

The girl turned pale to her very lips.

"It was not from caring for the sick that I shrank," said she, aloud. "If his mother had asked me to come to him as a nurse, I should have gone directly. My horror was at being linked to him by a relationship that people should not enter into"—and here a bright blush suffused her countenance—"unless they love each other very much. I would

rather have died than go to the altar beside his rolling-chair. I—"

"Bravo!" cried Mr. Krautner. "She is right, there, sister-in-law, but I can only tell you that not every girl thinks so, nowadays. For the sake of the poor man's money-bags, hundreds would have said 'Yes,' and buried their fresh youth in the sick-chamber, or not even that—they would have left him to sit alone, and amused themselves elsewhere. But, to make one's way in life independently, requires courage; and, by nursing the sick, dear child, the greatest courage. Have you thought over it well? It is a difficult post."

"Indeed, I have thought over it well, long and from all points of view," replied she. "Am I," she continued, "to increase the host of those who try to make a living as household drudges, or am I to turn my moderate ability to painting, which will yield an uncertain income? Or am I to set out to be a governess, when thousands are already vainly waiting for employment? On the contrary, I think there cannot come too many applicants for the post of sick-nurse, provided that they enter seriously upon their profession. And, the more refined in feeling is the person who takes her station by the sick-bed, so much the more beneficial will be the impression made upon the sufferer. I have thought so of myself, and Friz confirmed my judgment, when—when I used to help him with his patients."

Miss Rika said nothing more; she had turned away, and was apparently regarding a couple of pictures that stood against the wall. She did not

know what it was, but something about the girl's speech took hold upon her and reminded her of her father, for the first time, long as they had lived together. Whether it was the manner of her expression or the movement of her hand, she could not tell. Never before, either, had the girl made so long a speech.

"Well," said Mr. Krautner, and he rose to his feet, "all honor to your determination! But if it turns out harder than you expected, if your health should not prove sufficient for the strain, my dear, then you know where old Krautner lives. Give me your hand upon it. And if ever I am sick, nobody else shall nurse me. In that case, I hope that I shall not apply to you in vain. Adieu!"

Julia went on arranging the furniture, while Aunt Rika looked on; but neither of them spoke for a long while. When Julia finally sank exhausted into a chair by the window, it already looked quite homelike in the little room, for the girl had taken pains to hang every picture in exactly the same place as it had occupied in her old chamber. Then, in a tone of repressed feeling, Rika asked the question:

"When must you be in Cologne?"

"On the 15th of May, aunt."

"Why cannot you stay to the wedding? It comes off on the 20th of the same month."

"No, aunt. I am sorry, but it could not be so arranged," answered Miss Mischief.

Then she got up quickly and went out.

CHAPTER XVI.

NATURE AND LOVE SMILE.

Six days before the wedding. Julia's last day at home!

The old house seemed already pervaded by an atmosphere of festivity. The noise and bustle of mechanics had ceased; the maids from the Krautner villa, aided by the new servants, who were to form the household of the future married couple, had cleaned away the last traces left by workmen; and, shining like a jewel-casket, the upper story awaited its young mistress.

Improvement began at the front hall. The respectable old pavement, made out of red brick, that had long been wont to notify the inmates of the house of a change in the weather—they always looked moist a few days before the approach of rainy weather—had vanished, giving place to dazzling mosaic flagstones of black and white slabs of marble, so smooth and mirror-like that Minna crossed it unsteadily, like a skater that steps upon ice for the first time.

Pretty straw matting was stretched over it as far as the staircase, and all along the fashionably paint-

ed walls were ranged benches carved in the old German style. The windows above the stair-landing no longer admitted plain daylight; no, it flashed in many-colored rays through small panes of glass, covered with armorial designs, and sunbeams played in glowing warmth and brightness upon the soft carpeting that covered the dark old steps.

Minna was struck quite dumb with astonishment in view of all this grandeur. She had only *one* trouble: Her hard-headed son would not hear of having his office and reception-room fitted up in a style corresponding with such magnificence. He maintained that the old furniture, with which he was familiar, suited him, and that, in so far as his own comfort was concerned, he would not spend a penny on fine furniture. Moreover, he hoped and believed that his patients would miss nothing of the sort.

His mother submitted with a sigh. Contrary to her expectation, she had failed to find an ally in Theresa. She positively took no interest whatever in the appointments of the doctor's part of the house.

"Oh, he may do as he chooses about that," said she to her future mother-in-law. "If it is good enough for him, I have no fault to find."

A delicious May-day diffused joy over the face of earth. Nature was a perfect sea of bloom. This afternoon, Theresa was to entertain her friends for the last time, as a young girl. Julia had declined the invitation, on account of being so busy with her packing. Just at this moment, she was sitting in her little garret-room, engaged in painting. She

was just giving the last strokes of the brush to a large majolica plaque that was to serve as a wedding-present.

Already there was nothing left up here to betray that she had spent here the few bright hours of her life, for she had striven to remove every little token of her occupation. When she should have packed in her trunk her palette, colors and other painting materials, not a trace would be left of her. Would that she could as easily expunge the traces that had been impressed upon her here, upon just as sunny a May-day, the year before!

Now she laid aside her brush, and proceeded to examine her work. Upon the fine-toned, yellowish surface of the plaque was depicted a gnarled bough, with decaying leaves, so well drawn that it seemed as if one could pick it up and carry it away; below it, only sketchily indicated, was a broad, illimitable sheet of water, behind which the sun was sinking, while above it moved a flight of birds with outstretched wings, escaping from the winter. This was all, and yet in this little was expressed the longing of a heart that seeks sunshine and love as that feathered host does a warm country.

This was done unconsciously, for she had fully proposed to paint nothing that could betray her grief, her love; and yet this little work spoke it plainly enough.

She got up and left the room, carefully carrying her work with her. She knew the very place for it in what was to be the young people's dining-room, and wanted to hang it against the wall, as a last

mute greeting. The elegant rooms would now be forsaken, she was quite sure, for it was time for the afternoon nap. The key to the hall-door she had secretly abstracted from the key-basket of Aunt Minna, who was still, for the time being, guardian of this glory, and thus she entered the apartments that were so soon to shelter a young pair arrived at the summit of human bliss.

She did not pause to consider more closely the splendor of the abode, but went directly into the dining-room, where she meant to deposit her gift. It was the same room that had formerly been occupied by little Frederick Adami. It was an ideal banqueting-room for a small family, with its timbered roof, its wainscoated walls and deep window-recesses, as little to be recognized now, it is true, as the old entrance-hall below. The wainscoting had been richly decorated, the part of the wall not wainscoted being covered with costly embossed leather, and the great, homely porcelain-stove had given way to an old-fashioned open fire-place where, in winter, bright flames would woo to domestic enjoyment. In the middle of the room, where the boy's desk used to stand, arose resplendent a dining-table of massive oak, surrounded by high-backed chairs upholstered in leather. At all events, this room looked so grand that one would have been ashamed to serve and eat a simple lunch there.

Julia took from her apron-pocket a bronze-headed nail and a hammer, fastening her present over the Servian-table, whose majolica top matched her plaque well. A bronzed palm-leaf behind it, and

the simple decoration was complete. She stepped back to the nearest window to judge of the effect from there; meanwhile, her eyes were fixed upon it, to be sure, but they had suddenly a vacant, far-away look. As though very tired, she dropped into one of the trunk-like seats in the deep window-recess. It was oppressively silent up here. Even the pendulum of the costly clock swung with ghostly solemnity. And suddenly it seemed to the girl as though the spirits of the future were hovering near.

"Will happiness abide here—will it—will it?" ticked the clock. And Miss Mischief shook her head and clasped her hands together. *She* could not believe so. And then, close to her, in one of the small panes of window-glass, which the decorator had magnanimously left in because it suited the character of the room, she caught sight of a heart inartistically cut into it, and, underneath, the initials: "F. A.—T. K."

Fred must have done that. And there welled up in the girl's soul unspeakable bitterness, rage and immeasurable contempt. Oh, if she could only one single time hold up before that faithless creature a mirror that would clearly show her the vileness of her hypocrisy!

Mechanically Julia passed her slender fingers over the little heart, as though she could thus wipe it off the glass; but in vain; it was too deeply engraven.

"Julia!" suddenly cried out a clear merry voice

at her side. "Why, I might have been frightened to death! How come you here?"

Julia arose quickly.

"Excuse me," she said, with an effort. "I had a little thing to do here."

"What have you been putting on that glass?" asked Theresa, bending down her fair head; but abruptly she started back looking at Julia with flashing eyes and pallid countenance.

Since Theresa had known that Julia had kept the secret of her engagement to Fred; since she had known that the girl was going to leave the house—she had become more careless. No doubt, Julia herself considered her trifling with Fred's affections a mere *bagatelle*. For of that ill-timed visit of Fred's and of the ensuing consequences, Julia could have no inking. What, then, meant these threatening, reproachful eyes?

"It was Fred's room," said Julia, hoarsely. Theresa made no reply. "And he must have cut that heart there when you and he were engaged, about a year ago."

"Why do you bring that up to-day?" asked Theresa, defiantly. "You would like to publish the affair, I suppose, as a good joke, on the eve of my wedding-day!"

"I—I shall not be here on your wedding-eve, as you know, and that sad affair has never struck me as a fit subject for a joke," answered Miss Mischief, quietly. "On the contrary, I wish you as much happiness as this world can give, for henceforth your happiness is identical with that of a rare man,

and your tranquillity and his are one. And if I might live to see you really happy together, I believe that then—then I could forgive you much."

The color came back into the beautiful girl's face. No, Miss Mischief would never tell the tale of that foolish engagement, out of regard for *him*. For, as Minna had betrayed to her, this proud, beggarly thing was over head and ears in love with the doctor. And Theresa smiled like the May-day out-of-doors.

"Let his happiness be my care, please, although your ideas of what happiness is doubtless differ very materially from mine. Trust me, though, we shall get along very well together, even without your blessing! When do you actually set off?"

"To-morrow!" was the short reply.

"Well, then, we shall probably not see each other again. Farewell! I wish you happiness for the future, as sincerely as you do me."

"Farewell, Theresa; I hope that we may meet as friends, in later life."

"Why," said the person addressed, somewhat ironically. "I really cannot imagine what should make me your enemy!"

Julia was silent.

"I believe that I could hate intensely," she then said in a low tone; and again her eyes wandered to the window-pane.

Then she felt herself thrust aside with a push, and the next minute the fragments of the broken glass fell with a clatter upon the pavement of the yard below.

"There," asked Theresa's quivering voice, "are you pacified now?"

Julia slightly shrugged her shoulders.

"What had the innocent glass to do with it? Pity that one cannot as easily get rid of all disturbing causes?" And, turning away, she passed through the door.

"If she were only gone!" murmured Theresa, gloomily, as she followed the retreating figure with her eyes. And then a bright smile lit up her beautiful face. The doctor stood upon the threshold.

"Broken glass—and to-day?" he exclaimed, cheerfully.

She laughed.

"I awkwardly broke a pane. But doesn't that bring good luck?"

"Have you hurt yourself?" asked he tenderly, drawing her to him.

She smiled up at him.

"No, no! Isn't it lovely here? Is it not just as pretty as can be?"

He nodded assent, but did not look around, his gaze being riveted upon her own beloved features.

"I can hardly yet believe that you are actually to be mine," he whispered. "But come! Up here is the paradise that is still forbidden to me. Come, lest we provoke the anger of the gods."

CHAPTER XVII.

DESTINY MAKES STRANGE SPORT.

A balmy night followed that glorious May-day. For the last time, Miss Mischief looked out upon the blooming garden where the modest games of her childhood had been played. The morning would already find her at the post of duty; it might be standing at a death-bed. She did not dread the future. All that she wanted was work—plenty of work. Anything was better than the leisure that rouses the memory and does not allow the wounds of the soul to heal.

She would have preferred not to go to sleep at all but to take advantage of the first boat that passed in the morning, and to have gone off without any leave-taking. How she shrank from that leave-taking, which, to her, was synonymous with the loss of youth and bliss!

Quite softly she closed the window, that her aunt, who was close by, might not be disturbed; that strange old maid, who never had a kindly glance or a loving word for her, and to whom she was, nevertheless, bound to be grateful; for she had given the

orphan child a home under her roof—had fed, clothed and sent her to school.

Did she not hear her call, even now? Miss Mischief listened, in alarm. No; it was not a call but a hollow groan. The next instant found the young girl at the foot of her aunt's bed, and the quickly ignited candle revealed to her one utterly bereft of consciousness, with a face distorted by pain.

She flew through the hall, the reception-room and office, and then beat with her little fist against the doctor's door.

"Fritz! Fritz! Aunt is dying!"

Then she awakened Minna, and the next minute was again by the sufferer, supporting with her strong, young arms the moaning patient, who was vainly trying to articulate.

"A severe stroke of apoplexy, Mischief," said the physician, mournfully, after he had examined the poor thing and given her all the relief that he could. They stood together in the dark sitting-room adjoining the sick-room, and the cool night air came gently in. Minna had been left with her sister.

"You may as well prepare yourself for a long siege of nursing, poor little Mischief," continued the doctor.

She started back, feeling a disposition to cry out: "It is impossible! I *dare* not stay here!" But speedily her head sank again; yes, indeed, she was the one nearest to her—she— Who else was to attend to the lonely, embittered woman? And yet— "Have mercy on me! Oh, have mercy!" she murmured.

He did not comprehend her.

"Perhaps she—and you, too—will soon be released, for a second stroke of apoplexy would soon put an end to her poor life; but then, again, existence may be prolonged to her, but she will be a helpless, paralyzed woman, who cannot do without you."

"I know! I know!" she ejaculated. "Please, say no more. Yes, I 'll stay."

He pressed her hand, and returned to the patient's bedside. Instead of him, his mother came out, weeping and lamenting:

"Well, there is but one thing that could add to our misery, and that will surely come to pass—she will die, most likely, on the very eve of the wedding-day, and even if she lives, she will be so sick that Fritz must give up his wedding-trip on her account. No, that cannot be! Now, you just telegraph to Cologne and tell them that you have enough to do at home. With my stiff limbs, I can no longer lift and care for the sick. Only to think that things should come to such a pass!"

Julia paid no heed to the wails of the excited woman; she went on in the discharge of her duty and, when day dawned, she thought that she recognized a returning gleam of consciousness in the wide-open, staring eyes of her aunt, and she responded to her indistinct, painful efforts to articulate, by a few loud words that were accompanied by a soft stroking of her cheeks:

"Be easy, auntie, I 'll stay by you! Do you know me? It is Julia! Be perfectly easy!"

And something like a gleam of satisfaction flitted across the distorted features of the patient. The next day brought no change in the condition of the sick woman, but on the evening of the day before the marriage, she was able to move her paralyzed arm a little.

Theresa did not want to let anything disturb the jollity of this day, and although, at first, Fritz would not hear of having music and dancing, she finally gained his consent to let the ball proceed, through her pretty, coaxing ways.

"Yes, Fritz, we must dance once more together like merry young folks, for after marriage, father says, it is all over with dancing and gayety. And from to-morrow morning, you know, I shall belong to you, but to-day, Fritz—to-day—"

He visited his old aunt once more, before he went to the bride's house, to the festival that was to precede his wedding-day. Out-of-doors, the sun was sinking behind a mass of clouds, and in the dim twilight Julia sat, motionless, at the window, in the old-fashioned arm-chair. She had leaned her head back against the cushion, and did not perceive the young man's approach, until he stood before her. Her startled glance told that she observed his being in full-dress, and her lips were pressed tightly together.

"Let me ask just this one thing of you, Julia," said he: "Please, close the windows of the sick-room, so that the music shall not excite aunt. I would have preferred to spend the evening quietly, but I could not have the heart to thwart Theresa on

this last day of her girlhood—especially as she has already voluntarily given up our wedding-trip."

"But why was that!" asked she bluntly. "Things are getting along very well, I am here, and 'Uncle Doctor' would come, if any bad symptoms should appear."

He gave her a searching glance; she had the same sad look as of old.

Becoming conscious of his scrutiny, she flushed painfully.

"Oh, please excuse me!" stammered she. "I was merely sorry to have you give up your trip, on aunt's account. As for the rest, what is it to me?"

She turned off, ashamed and angry at herself. He must have guessed how hard it was for her to be an eye-witness of his married happiness.

"Go without any anxiety," she then added. "I'll attend dutifully to everything here.

And when he was gone, she carefully closed the window of the sick-room, but the one in the ante-chamber she opened wide, and, racked by torturing sensations, there she sat the livelong night, listening to the sounds of music and revelry that sounded so clearly in her ears; and thus she was still sitting when, in the gray of dawn, mother and son came home.

"Getting hardened," she called it with a bitter smile.

The next day, she had not once left the sick-room, when the newly-married pair piously drew near the couch of the sufferer, who had again recovered full consciousness. She stood at the foot of the bed, and

with wide-open eyes gazed at the bride, enveloped in white satin and lace, who, with her peach-bloom complexion and golden hair, looked more charming than ever under the misty purity of her vail. Then the couple turned to go. The doctor did not look up. He appeared not to have noticed the pale, proudly erect maiden at the foot of the bed. Silently he laid Theresa's hand upon his arm; and she looked neither to the right nor the left.

Hereupon Miss Mischief stepped forward and stood in their way.

"Accept my congratulations also," said she pleadingly, holding out her hand first to him and then to his young wife.

Hesitatingly Theresa touched the right hand proffered her, and directly afterward her long, lace-trimmed train rustled across the threshold.

And still, weirdly still, it became in that house; for the wedding-feast was to take place in "*Die Traube*," and the very servants were there, either as waiters or spectators.

Julia sat by her aunt's bedside. Slowly, slowly the shades of evening advanced, and the moon rose from behind the tall trees. The patient slept, and still nobody was at home.

Julia got up and passed through the hall, to see whether the front door was locked. They would be likely to return through the garden, the gate of which stood wide open. A streak of moonlight fell upon the marble flagstones, plainly showing the flowers that had been scattered there early in the day. She stood in the shadow of the door, breath-

ing the fragrant air, which was sultry, as if a storm were coming on. On the other side of the Rhine, every now and then, quivered flashes of forked lightning, while near at hand sang the nightingales in the garden, too loud, though, for her overstrained senses.

Then the little iron gate clicked, and Julia saw the gleaming of a fluttering white robe. It was the bridal couple coming home.

Trembling, she flew across the hall to the sick-room and again seated herself at the slumberer's bedside. How the hours passed she did not know. She found herself, next morning, shivering with cold, resting her aching head against the foot of the old lady's bed.

What a leaden weight seemed attached to every limb and what a dull sense of anguish in her bosom! What had happened? She drew herself up and pressed her hands against her throbbing temples, when her glance fell upon a small sprig of myrtle that lay on the floor by the bed. It must have fallen from the bride's vail when Theresa knelt there.

Ah, yes! She knew now: They were man and wife!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CONJUGAL TETE-A-TETE.

Two years have elapsed.

Miss Rika Trautmann had proved to have a powerful constitution. She spoke again and had full use of her mental faculties, but, alas, had never recovered the use of her limbs. Julia had to dress and tend her like an infant.

"She does everything so conscientiously," said the old spinster to her nephew, "but as coldly and mechanically as a slave. Not a symptom of friendship, not a trace of that which is the true balsam to apply to the wounds of such a poor Lazarus as I am. Of love—"

It was a hot day in the beginning of August when she thus lamented.

The young doctor had just returned from paying his round of visits to his patients, and looked at her vacantly, as though he had to call in his thoughts from the far-away.

"You want to reap a harvest of love, aunt, when you have never sown a grain of the same in this heart which you criticise," said he, quietly.

A vivid color suddenly flushed the sunken features of her who lay before him.

"Well, and so you have news of Fred?" said he, leading her away from the subject in hand. "I heard it from my mother, who gave Theresa this piece of news. Is he getting along well?"

"Yes, thank God! Will you not take the letter upstairs with you? It is quite interesting. Perhaps Theresa would like to read it, too. But go now; she will certainly be keeping breakfast for you by this time. Have you already seen your boy this morning?"

"Yes," said he, and his face lighted up. "Dame Doris is walking him in the garden."

He took the letter that lay on the stand, more out of politeness than curiosity, and took his leave. After he had quickly changed his coat, he stepped into his wife's boudoir. She was not there. He now knew that he would surely find her in her dressing-room. He was right. Theresa had gotten from her father the present of a new costume, that was evidently meant for a travelling-suit, and she was trying it on. She smilingly turned toward him her rosy face.

"Well, how are your two ill patients getting along?" queried she. "Will they let us get off?"

"I can give you no decided answer yet, my dear," he answered, gazing upon her with rapture, in her jaunty new suit. "But a few days will make no difference, will it?"

"I beg your pardon—a great deal! People are already remarking that you have never travelled,"

quickly retorted she. "No difference, indeed! Why it is the height of the season now at Ostend. A few weeks later, and our three weeks' stay will fall in September, and in September, you know, only those people go who want to live cheaply. Not a single man of distinction is to be found there, nor any woman of fashion; there will no longer be any display of fine dressing; the fare will be worse; in short—it is horrid!"

"My poor little darling!" smiled he, consolingly. "I am indeed afraid that these two patients are going to interfere sadly with our plans."

"And do you say that so composedly?" asked she, adjusting two rich gray ribbons into a stylish bow, at the waist of her silk wrap that he helped her to put on.

"Yes. What am I to do? I cannot tear my hair out, on that account."

"What they say is certainly true, that you doctors are the slaves of human society," said she, very deliberately, "and that—"

"When one has married a doctor, she too becomes a sort of slave," said he finishing her sentence. "Well, at all events, you are a fascinating little slave, and I am unspeakably sorry that possibly this really charming *toilette* must be content with displaying itself to admiring eyes on the deck of a Rhine-steamer." He comically heaved a deep sigh. "Yes, seriously, wifie, those poor people are badly off. God knows when we can set out on our trip."

She answered not a word, but continued to devote her attention to the tying of her sash, humming an

air softly to herself. Finally the bow set to please her. With her slender fingers she snipped off a tiny bit of the ends, slowly undid the knot, laid off her mantle and exchanged her new suit for a pretty morning-gown, all the while singing in an undertone, and rejecting the kiss which he wanted to imprint upon her fair white arm. And when she was done, she said:

"Now we 'll have breakfast."

"You always do the correct thing!" he cried.

When they sat opposite each other in the cool dining-room she remarked:

"Nothing will go awry here if I should take the trip with papa alone. At any rate, just taste this mutton-chop and these fried apples. Susy cooked them, without any help at all."

He laid down his knife and fork and, utterly disconcerted, fixed his eyes upon his charming *vis-à-vis*.

"You can come afterward, if you find time, later," she went on, putting between her lips a tempting morsel of potato-chips.

"Are you in earnest?"

"Of course I am. You may be a slave as much as you choose, but I decline to be yoked with you. What are those strangers to me, with their typhus-fever?"

"It will be very lonesome here for us, the boy and me," said he, finally.

"For goodness' sake, Fritz, what are you talking about? Do you think I would leave the baby

behind? No; that boy, with his nurse, goes with me to Ostend."

"No, darling; the boy stays with his nurse in the country, to be fed longer on the milk of the brindle cow, that has been fattened up and dieted specially for his use."

Now, Mistress Theresa, in her turn, laid down knife and fork and with astonishment and curiosity stared at her husband on account of this unwonted opposition to her wishes.

"There is the best of milk at Ostend," she then said dryly; "besides, we have the new cooking apparatus with us, by means of which any noxious qualities that the milk may have are removed. And I *will* not set out without the child! All mothers take their little ones with them!"

"Nevertheless, you will have to make up your mind to it, if you will not stay here, for I shall, in no case, consent to the child being exposed to those dangers that so young a creature must incur, under a totally altered condition of life."

"But, love, you act as if the boy were your sole property," see replied, in greatest tranquillity. "Only consider that mothers certainly have the first right to their little ones! What is to become of him without me?"

He could but laugh in spite of himself.

"One would think the little fellow is hardly ever out of your arms, while the fact is that Nurse Doris has almost entire charge of him. Besides, I am here to supervise, and I need not assure you that

during your absence I shall redouble my watchfulness as regards the care taken of him."

"And how, if you were to join me after a while?"

"Why, there would still be three grown women in the house to see that no harm came to him," replied he, still half laughing and half in earnest. "In the first place, there is his grandmother," continued he, "who is ever ready to wear herself out, as she has already done the soles of her shoes, in seeing the little fellow as often as possible—"

"Your mother may see him as often as she pleases, but I do not want her to trouble herself about his bring up, or to interfere with Doris's management of him, as she likes to do, and naturally would have a right to do, when I am gone. By the way, she has never forgiven me for not using those three yards of swathing-cloth that had been put on you when a baby, and cannot comprehend why I will not put a quilted cap on the poor little fellow's head when he is carried out for a walk on the finest of summer days."

"Ah, Theresa, I have explained all that to her. She just loves the child tenderly and—"

"Well, and now comes, as second guardian, Aunt Rika, I suppose, who needs a nurse for herself."

"Well, I grant that we cannot depend upon Aunt Rika for much, but do not forget Julia."

Now Theresa's eyes flashed.

"I must beg of you to consider Julia as having no concern whatever with this affair!" she exclaimed. "I have good reason to believe that she cannot bear me; and neither does she like my child."

"Theresa, you are unjust!"

"No," answered the excited young woman, "I am not! If you did not have that foolishly sentimental compassion for her, such as men always feel in their inmost souls for women whom they believe to have been in love with them, you would long ago have noticed the marked aversion that this Miss Mischief shows toward me and my child as well. Why, she positively quite looks down upon me!"

"Because you are a head shorter than she," suggested he, composedly.

"I am in no mood to jest just now," cried she. "If I say anything, Miss Julia contemptuously curls her lip. If I am playing with the baby, I see her dark eyes fixed upon me so strangely that I can use no words to express it but—just hungrily. She envies me that boy. And if we are all three together, then she turns off and goes into her own room, as though the sight of us was poison. She is a dreadfully envious character."

"Who told you that she once loved me?" asked he, quietly; and his eyes looked beyond her to the majolica plaque that Julia had painted for a wedding present.

"My own little bit of sense, doctor, and your own mother."

"Ah!"

"And that you have ever been deeply touched through this consideration, I am again told by my own reason and my own eyes."

"Ah, indeed!"

He suddenly cleared his throat, swallowed a glass of wine, and then said with distinct voice:

"So it is settled. The boy stays here with Nurse Doris, under my supervision."

There was scrutiny in the nervous glance that she cast upon her husband's countenance. Since, however, she could distinguish nothing but an expression of great determination that hardly admitted of contradiction, she sighed, began to pare a peach, and then remarked:

"One must just make up one's mind to be again the wiser and yield."

"In that you do well, little woman."

"Are you not glad that I am not jealous of—that Julia?" asked she now, laughingly, holding out to him one-half of the peach.

"I really find nothing in it to call for great self-gratulation. It is perfectly normal," replied he. "I should be extremely glad to know that she is not jealous. You are aware that there is no place in my heart for any other image than yours and that of our boy."

She had risen from her seat and came over to him, imprinting a kiss upon his brow.

"After all, you are a good, silly old fellow," said she.

He held her fast and drew her down upon his knee.

"And I hope," laughed he, "that your heart is built upon precisely the same model as mine—that is to say, has no room in it for anyone but my boy and me."

She tossed her head.

"And if it were not so?" whispered she; and, full of coquetry, her biue eyes beamed upon him.

"Theresa, you are not to jest upon such a subject."

"Never mind that," persisted she. "Tell me what you would do if you should discover that any other man besides yourself—"

He did not answer, for one instant of introspection seemed to have revealed to him the horrors of such a situation, and the young wife was horrified, so livid became his features, so fixed his eyes.

"Do not, pray, Fritz?" cried she. "It was only a joke!"

And she shook him by the shoulder, turning pale herself.

"What would I do?" said he, in hollow tone. "I do not know; it would be given to me at the time; but I can understand how murder is the outcome of such jealousy."

She got up and shivered as though taken with a chill.

And now he sought to soothe her.

"You foolish little woman, that comes of your silly question. Why talk of things that lie outside of the domain of the possible? Come, take a sip of wine and go to papa. Tell him that I put my most precious possession under his charge, to escort to Ostend. And set off soon, the earlier to return."

He kissed her once more and went down-stairs.

CHAPTER XIX.

BAD NEWS.

Julia sat by Aunt Rika's rolling-chair under the nut-tree in the garden. The old lady looked dreamily into the distance, while Julia read aloud the newspaper to her. Aunt Minna was stringing beans, but, none the less, keeping a sharp lookout upon the child's carriage that the nurse was trundling to and fro upon the sidewalk next the wall. The shrill voice of the old woman was distinctly heard here, as she incessantly poured forth an unintelligible jargon of endearing terms that the boy responded to in a baby's equally mysterious way.

Minna's countenance expressed displeasure and suspicion; the old nurse's resembled that of an angered lioness from whom they want to take her young. Mistress Theresa had set out on her travels the day before and, already early this morning, grandmother and Doris had been disputing over the bed of this slumbering little world's wonder, and the doctor himself had hardly been able to smooth down this ruffled spirit.

Julia's deep, pleasant voice was suddenly interrupted by a shrill call from Minna:

"Drive on, this minute, out of that glaring sunshine! Do you want the little cherub to have a sunstroke?"

The nurse acted as though she heard nothing, placidly chattering away to her charge:

"Never mind, you precious thing, you! You just live in the pretty sunshine, you do! You love the air and sunshine, don't you, pet? Yes, yes, the dear, good sunshine!"

"That woman must leave this house directly, or I 'll have a stroke of apoplexy!" stammered the old lady.

Julia had let her paper drop while the dispute lasted, and now read on to the end of a leading article.

"Please look to see if there is any news from Africa."

"I have looked already, aunt, but there is nothing," answered the young girl.

"Not among the dispatches either?"

Julia looked among the dispatches.

"Paris—London—Madrid—Zanibar," she murmured.

All at once she held the large paper close before her face and the sheet trembled in her hand.

"Why do you tremble?" asked the old lady.

Slowly the sheet was lowered; the pale but rigid features of the girl were again visible.

"Did I tremble?" asked she. "There is nothing in it from Africa."

At this moment, in the fullness of her rage, Aunt Minna darted off to give the hated child's nurse a piece of her mind.

Aunt Rika looked steadily at her adopted daughter.

"Am I to read on?" asked Julia, the accents of her voice being strangely altered.

"Is there really no news from Africa in that paper?"

Julia shook her head, and looked toward the doctor, who was just returning from his round of calls, in the glowing August sun, clad in a light-gray summer-suit, a straw hat in his hand, and wiping his forehead with his handkerchief. She pretended to have something to do behind the old lady's chair, looking toward the man approaching and laid her finger upon her lips.

The doctor came quietly forward, seated himself, and began to talk of various things. Julia went forward to meet his mother, who, with the sense of her superiority both as grandmother and mistress, came back with her head on high.

"I should like to tell you something, aunt. Please come down here with me a moment," said Julia. "I have just read in the newspaper that Fred has been wounded in a fight with the natives; but Aunt Rika is not to know about it."

The old lady clasped her hands together.

"*Severely* wounded, of course!" exclaimed she. "And that is as good as to say that he is dead!"

Julia kept silence.

"And you!" cried Minna, working herself into a passion. "There you stand, and do not say a

word! What sort of a girl are you? And it is your own brother that is concerned, too. I never could bear the conceited jackanapes; and yet it goes to the heart to see him punished so; that he must perish so miserably out yonder among savages, without a soul near that belongs to him!"

Julia did not defend herself against this reproach.

"All I ask is: Please do not make aunt uneasy," she implored. "You had better not go where she is now; she is so observant and suspicious she would find out directly that something has happened."

"Sly as I am," answered the old lady, "I would rather not see the poor creature just now. Go fetch the newspaper and bring it to me in the kitchen, for I want to read it."

"Well," soliloquized she, as she moved on, "either he will die or come back an invalid to lie up, high and dry, to be supported by us. God in heaven forgive me, I would rather he had been killed outright!"

After dinner, when the unsuspecting old lady was sleeping in her cool chamber, Julia sat by the window in her own room, motionless, her hands in her lap and the newspaper before her that had brought these brief, momentous tidings. Now, too, not a feature in her face betrayed emotion; only her small mouth was more firmly compressed than usual. She kept it so always now. Julia had long since recognized the fact that no wrestling nor lamenting could avert a stroke of fate, and her personal sensi-

bilities seemed to have been permanently blunted; she only felt through her care for others.

Now she only thought that the news of the wounding or, maybe, death of the old lady's favorite would be like a dagger-thrust in some vital part, from which she could not recover. She was thinking that, perhaps, Fred had courted death, because he could not forget Theresa, and that she would be utterly alone when she had no longer a brother. For how like a stranger she was in the midst of these people, in whose company she had, nevertheless, passed her life, as it were! She was linked to her patient, even, only by piety and a sense of duty. She was thus making a return to the benefactress who had furnished her with food and shelter when she came to her, orphaned and an outcast. But she had never been able to reason herself into a warmer affection for the old lady. And Fritz? With all the force of a strong will, she had curbed her heart in its devotion to him; and she now regarded him with cold indifference, and only a gleam of impotent rage would now and then fire up when he wanted to compassionate her.

But this, too, she kept to herself. There was no outward sign of it, save a contemptuous curling of the lip, when, especially in the beginning of his married life, he had tried to vail his fondness and happiness in her presence; if, upon her entrance, he would let drop the hand of his young wife, which he had just pressed to his lips, or when he would try, by a great effort, to withdraw his eyes from the contemplation of her rosy countenance.

She would then smile bitterly, as she did again when he attempted to conceal from her his anxiety about the life of that beloved wife the time that her infant was expected. But his pale, agonized countenance during the hours that preceded the appearance of the little one had been like a revelation to her. How dearly that woman must be loved!

"Show me your child, Fritz!" she had then asked of him; and had gone up with him into those elegant rooms, and he had brought out a bundle containing the new-born babe, and allowed her to inspect the little creature. And above the head of the little one their glances had met.

Miss Mischief did not know that she had looked at the man with an expression that sent a pang to his jubilant heart. At that moment, the proud dignified girl reminded him of a freezing, hungry beggar-child who looks with feverish longing into a brightly lit parlor, on Christmas Eve, and in the grandeur that she beholds forgets how poor she is. In those dark, lustrous eyes was read rapture over the tiny sleeping creature.

"Ah, how sweet!" whispered she, and stretched out her arms.

Just then Theresa's faint voice was heard from the adjoining room, and the arms fell and the curtaining lashes drooped lower than ever over her eyes.

The child was taken from him; he attended Julia to the door with a heart full of delight and pity, and then it was that he was guilty of a breach of tact in his treatment of the girl. He stroked her cheek and said:

"You, too, will be happy some day, Mischief."

The cold repulse that he met with, however, speedily silenced him. Since then, she had neither asked after the child nor ever even looked at it if it were brought past her. She did not love the child! So at least thought the inmates of the house.

"Whoever cannot bear children has no heart!" said Minna to her, and added, in bewilderment: "And, in spite of this, the little simpleton laughs when he sees you and calls out: 'Ula!' Such an innocent!"

They did not know that the little boy and "Ula" had cemented a friendship in secret; that the old dragon of a child's nurse would intrust her jewel to the quiet, beautiful girl without the slightest reluctance. They had a regular standing engagement, those two, namely, at the time when mother and grandmother would be invited out to tea, the doctor visiting his patients and Aunt Rika napping. Then she would slip upstairs, kneel by the crib and play with the boy, patiently allowing him to pull at her hair with his chubby little fists. She taught him his first lesson in the art of speech, showing him how to say "papa," and then she passionately clasped him to her heart.

"Oh, you darling!" she whispered. "I could die for you!"

"Don't tear the boy to pieces!" then scolded the old woman, who used to sit by the window and knit stockings for her charge. "And you had much better live; any one with *that* mother will have need enough of such a good aunt."

Dame Doris could not at all conceal her aversion for both mother and grandmother.

Julia never replied to such onslaughts, and, at the slightest suspicious noise, vanished from the cosy nursery. Once she had not time for escape, and with beating heart, took refuge behind the curtain that served Dame Doris for a wardrobe; and there, with closed eyes and compressed lips, she had listened to all the terms of endearment lavished by the father upon his pet. How soft his voice sounded! Julia knew that cadence; long ago he had spoken to her in the same tone. And she had thought she could not bear to hear him speak so; she must shriek in her agony if he did not stop. Thank God, he was called away, and she could accomplish her flight!

Suddenly Julia started from her reverie; the clock in the adjoining room had sounded the hour when she was accustomed to pay her visit to Dame Doris's dominions. Quickly she rose from her seat and glided lightly up to the nursery; but nurse and child were both asleep, the old woman in her chair and the little one in his cradle. Julia knelt before the little bed and took her fill of gazing upon him whose existence crowned with such joy the lives of others. All at once she started up and, with anxious face, sought to reach the door, but this time she did not succeed in making good her escape. The doctor stood before her, and greeted her presence with astonished eyes.

"You here?" he asked.

And he thought of his wife's declaration that Julia hated the child.

"I beg pardon," said she, defiantly, making the attempt to pass him.

"Wait a second!" said he quietly. "I was looking for you down-stairs. Here is a telegram from Fred. At his own desire, they have put him on board a man-of-war coming directly to Germany. Such are the laconic contents of the telegram, that I obtained through the medium of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs at Berlin. Nothing is said as to his condition; but since they risk his transportation, there must be hope of his recovery— He is coming, then!"

A flood of thoughts rushed through Julia's head.

"Here?" stammered she.

"Whither else should he come? His home is with us!"

"He is not to come!" said she, in a tone of deep distress.

"What means that?" asked the doctor, straightening himself out of his stooping posture. He had been watching the slumbering child.

"Nothing!" answered she and left the room.

Julia got no sleep that night. There ever rose before her eyes two youthful figures, as they sat opposite one another in the boat, exchanging love-looks—Fred and Theresa. Could persons who had thus looked at one another ever forget?

With aching head she got up next day.

"He dare not come! He dare not!" said she. Then came the spirit of defiance: "What is it to me?"

CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE RETURNED SOLDIER IS RECEIVED.

"Well and good, dear sister-in-law; the wounded soldier is to stay with us," said Mr. Krautner, who had long since returned, with his daughter, from Ostend; and, so saying, he emphatically struck the pavement with his cane. "Evidently, there is no room here in this house, while I have twelve chambers unoccupied. Give yourselves no uneasiness. He shall lack for nothing at my house, and you can see your adopted son just as often as you choose. The door in the garden-wall, that I have had made for my children, is open to him as well. Agreed, then: First Lieutenant Adami takes up his quarters with me."

Aunt Rika essayed to interpose some objections.

"It would answer well enough here. Let him come as a son to his mother!" said she, piteously. "And Julia could go up into the garret. I would have a little stove put up there."

"Perhaps you might have the rabbit-warren fitted up for the girl!" exclaimed the old gentleman, indignantly. "Nothing of the sort! The lieuten-

ant comes to me. Do you hear, my daughter?" said he, turning to Julia. "Will it not be best so?"

"Yes!" said the girl, raising her eyes from her embroidery. "Yes! At all events, I am not going into that cold garret under any circumstances."

Aunt Rika looked up in bewilderment. Never before had the girl declined any arrangement out of regard for her own personal comfort. This self-assertion on her part made the old lady's nerves fairly tingle.

"Why, how is this?" remarked she. "There was a time when one could not get you out of that room, and now you will not enter it!"

"No, aunt."

"Why not?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Because I freeze up there," she answered shortly.

"Well, it is settled; the lieutenant stays with me," once more began the old gentleman. Then, with a bow, he was gone.

Those left behind had nothing to say to each other. Miss Rika silently wept. Julia, taking no notice of this, only looked up now and then from her work, to observe how quickly the snowflakes were falling upon this December day.

"You will bring him from the railroad station, will you not?" at last began Aunt Rika. "And tell him, as gently as you can, that there is no longer any room for him in his adoptive mother's house."

"I will."

"You have acquired such a harsh tone in speaking

Julia, that one dreads to ask anything of you," lamented the old lady.

"Ah, indeed!" answered the girl. "Was I different formerly?"

"Everybody in the house complains of you," continued Aunt Rika. "It was dreadfully disobliging of you not to help them a little upstairs with their dancing-party."

"I know nothing about such things—and then—Theresa cannot bear to have me about her."

At this moment there was a knock, and Theresa entered. She had been with Santa Claus, she said, laughing, and had brought something with her. And with various playful remarks she unwrapped two little packages, handing one to each of the ladies.

Theresa had never before been known to bestow any attention upon Julia. The latter at first gazed in surprise upon the elegant woman, in her rich velvet mantle, the brown folds of which were still sprinkled with snowflakes. "For me?" she asked, and at the corners of her mouth was perceptible that peculiar twitching of which we have spoken before.

"Yes, certainly!" ran the affirmative reply; and then Theresa again hurried out.

"Well, there you are again convicted upon the spot of the injustice of your assertion that Theresa cannot bear you," said Miss Rika.

"What! By that?"

Julia did not even take the trouble to open the package. She went on with her knitting, while the

sick woman, with her stiff fingers, laboriously drew forth her present from its paper wrapping and expressed great pleasure at the pretty little box that fell out, probably full of the finest confectionary. Julia's present, however, lay just where it was, in the afternoon, when the girl had already gone to the station to meet her long-absent brother.

"She grows more unbearable every day," said Minna, after she had heard the story of the disregarded gift. "If she had not been so absolutely necessary to your comfort, Rika, you would have been forced to get rid of her long ago; but that is just the rub."

"That she is so utterly lacking in affection is my greatest trouble," asserted Miss Rika; and as she said this, her old heart thrilled with joy at the thought that she was soon to be permitted to clasp her beloved boy to her heart.

"A mother cannot look forward to meeting her own son with greater impatience," murmured Minna; and she went back to her own room, to avoid the "comedy" of the reunion.

A half-hour later, Aunt Rika sat at supper between her two adopted children. The old lady's heart was too full to partake of food, but she could never be satisfied with the contemplation of the tall, handsome man by her side, whose imbrowned visage showed hardly a trace of suffering, although he still wore his arm in a sling.

He answered patiently and pleasantly all the confused questions of the aged woman, who had him to tell the particulars of his being wounded four times

in the space of a single hour ; he praised the carp and their Rhenish wine ; said to his sister that he found her greatly improved in appearance—taller and a genuine Roman. He cheerfully agreed to taking up his quarters with Mr. Krautner, after he reflected that overhead—exactly overhead—Fritz was housed with his young wife ; and he listened with polite sympathy to the enthusiastic description of "the baby," into which his aunt launched, in the exuberance of her delight.

"And let me tell you, Fred," she wound up with, "they are happy people that dwell upstairs. One seldom sees so well matched a couple ; and now, when they have been married nearly three years, they appear to be just as much in love with each other as on the day of their betrothal."

He once more helped himself to fish.

"I am truly rejoiced to hear that," he said dryly.

Julia had not the heart to look at him.

"To-morrow will do for you to pay your visit upstairs," continued Aunt Rika ; "and to your aunt Minna, too, who, also makes her home up there. You can see for yourself how the young bloom and the old fade away."

And tears ran down the old lady's cheeks, which she could not wipe off with her poor, helpless hands.

"It is time for you to go to bed," said Julia, finally, in a low voice.

"Ah, not so soon ; I cannot sleep yet," implored the aunt. "Bring out some apples and nuts, Julia ; it will then be once more like it was when you were children."

Obediently Julia did as she was bidden, and Fred began to talk again. Abruptly, though, he hushed, and a dark flush suffused his face. Some one was playing on the piano overhead.

"It is Theresa," said the old lady, proudly. "She is doing it to please the boy."

Julia anxiously scrutinized his countenance. Melancholy were the strains that sounded from above. The air played was a variation upon the song, "A Wanderer Came With Staff in Hand."

"It is a favorite of Fritz's," remarked Julia aloud, noisily piling up the plates. And the happy old woman softly repeated the words of the song, while she stroked the man's hand:

"Sun-burned through his face might be,
His mother knew at once 't was he."

"But you do look different from what you did when you went away, Fred; you have grown handsomer, almost as handsome as your father."

He suddenly rose to his feet, for the tune upstairs had changed to the waltz in "Faust."

"Now, sleep well," said he; "we are all tired. I am not quite so strong myself as I might be; to-morrow I 'll tell you more. Help me to put on my overcoat, Julia. And now, good night! I still know the way."

"No, I am going with you," she objected. And so they walked together through the snow-covered garden paths.

"So, they have a gate here now," he murmured.

And as though he would shake off, by force, all memories of the past, he said aloud :

" The old lady has become quite feeble— Ah, how d' ye do, Mr. Krautner! I am so much indebted to you for opening your house to me so hospitably. How have you been all this while?"

Julia, who had instantly turned around upon the coming up of Mr. Krautner, heard, nevertheless, the old gentleman say :

" Welcome, lieutenant! How are you, now? Have you stood the journey well? Have you sobered down a bit, too, as I recommended you to do, when we parted last? Yes? Well, I am delighted at that. Now, come in, and make yourself perfectly at home with me!"

When she got back, the music upstairs had ceased. In the hall she met the doctor who had just left his study.

" Say, Mischief," asked he, " am I mistaken, or was Theresa actually playing on the piano?"

" Yes, she was playing."

" Wonderful!" he murmured. Then he turned around once more. " Did your brother get here all safe?"

" Yes," answered she laconically, moving rapidly out of sight.

Up in her boudoir, the doctor found his wife walking excitedly to and fro.

" It is well that you have come," said she. " I have such a dreadful feeling. I think the wind must cause it."

" Oh, you little wisdom!" teased he. " There is

not a breath of air astir out-of-doors; it is only snowing in great, thick flakes, so that you can have a sleigh-ride at Christmas. By the way, have you noticed anything about the African?"

"I? No! What have I to do with him?" answered she, quickly.

"Well, don't be angry! There was no harm in my question, love!"

"I did not think that there was."

"Very well! But I am glad that you have taken to playing on the piano again, dear heart."

She made no reply.

CHAPTER XXI.

GHOSTS OF THE PAST

The young officer had now been three weeks at home. It was not to be denied that he had "made things hum," as Doctor Roettger good-humoredly said.

The enmity between the two old playmates seemed to have entirely vanished. Although they did not associate from inclination, yet mutual respect had taken the place of the earlier reserve; each esteemed in the other the able man, who devoted all his energies to his calling. The overbearing demeanor of the lieutenant had softened down into an amiable, modest manner, and the harshness of the other into a mildness that seemed to have its source in his domestic felicity. And thus there were now hours of social enjoyment around the doctor's tea-table, on the upper floor, where the whole family would assemble, the returned traveller being the center of attraction; there were grand feasts of a Sunday, in the Krautner villa, and even old Mrs. Roettger had screwed herself up to the extravagance of a leg and loin of veal.

Christmas had gone, with its brightness and good cheer. The distribution of handsome presents had collected the family around the dining-room table of the young couple, and the voice of the little boy, who, shouting for joy, had stretched out his hands after the glittering tree, had been an entrancing sound for all ears.

A load had been lifted even from Julia's breast. She breathed more freely now. The wound once inflicted by the beautiful blonde upon her brother's heart appeared to be perfectly healed, and Theresa —yes, Theresa had less than ever eyes and ears for any other than her husband. Never could Julia discover that the two—Fred and Theresa—ever exchanged a glance other than was usual between ordinary acquaintances or relations. They stood upon the footing of mutual friendly esteem, and conversed indifferently, as though that fair head had never leaned upon his bosom, as though he had never kissed the rosy lips of the charming woman, and as though her eyes had never shed burning tears on his account.

Julia rejoiced ; but she was astonished at this fact as at something incomprehensible. She wondered if his heart did not ache a little bit.

Gradually the merry season of the carnival drew near. Theresa sat over the newest fashion magazines ; the lieutenant was drawing for her the custume of a Swedish peasant-girl, that he pronounced charming and exactly suited to her own style of beauty. After dinner, these two had been left alone in the dinning-room. Papa Krautner and the officer

had dined with the young couple, Fritz had been called off, but the old gentleman had retired to take his afternoon nap. Before them both stood half-emptied cups of Mocha coffee; above them floated light-blue circles of smoke from the cigarette which the officer was smoking. The air was warm, redolent of tobacco, oranges and coffee. The fire was glowing on the hearth and cast its radiance upon the mirroring parquetry, as far as the Smyrna carpet, under the massive table. The pale light of the January day only dimly lit the comfortable apartment.

The journal rustled in the lady's hand, and the lead-pencil which the lieutenant was using moved briskly over the paper. They both remained silent; for the first time they were alone.

Now Theresa folded her arms and fixed her eyes upon the draughtsman.

"There," said he, as unconcernedly as possible, although, with all his self-control, he could not hinder the quavering of his voice—"there; now let your fancy add the coloring, the variegated embroidery, the marvelous blue of the bodice, and you have about an idea of what it is like. I saw this costume on board a Swedish ship. The captain had his young wife with him, a beautiful blonde like—you, Theresa."

She started and blushed. Then again deep silence ensued. She finally got up and silently went across to the fire-place and began raking among the coals. He had followed her with his eyes, and she must

have been conscious of his gaze, for she turned around.

"Suppose we skate a little?" asked she, impetuously.

"If you like."

Theresa now stepped into the window-recess, to look at the sky and the thermometer. He left his seat and followed her. Thus they stood close together in that secluded room, almost entirely concealed behind the folds of the richly embroidered curtains. A greenish light poured through the small, lead-encased panes of glass; only a single one emitted clearer rays.

"How often have I stood here," said he softly, "my Cornelius Napos in hand, learning my lesson, and looking over the book into the yard, like a scapegrace, begrudging every minute that kept me upstairs. And then, later, I once stood here--" and his hand pointed at the new pane.

"Be done with memories of the past!" were words that came almost pleadingly from her lips.

"Shall we separate, then?"

"Yes!" replied she; but still she lingered. And suddenly she turned her beautiful countenance full upon him; it was suffused with crimson. "Tell me only one thing," was breathed rather than whispered to him, "that you have forgiven me!"

"No—never!"

She looked at him timidly, then lowered her eyes, trembling and reaching out her hand, so as to support herself upon the window-seat.

"How could I forgive her who has robbed me of

my life's happiness?" continued he, bitterly. "Did I forget this injustice? I must first be able to forget myself!" So saying, he bowed and retired.

Theresa stood rooted to the spot where he had left her.

The maid came in after a long while.

"Mrs. Roettger!"

She stirred slowly.

"What do you want?"

"The lieutenant says he is waiting for you, ma'am, to go skating."

She put her hand to her forehead.

"Tell him I am sorry that I cannot go; it is too late now; and besides, my head aches. But no, do not give that last reason!"

She went into the nursery, but the little one was down in his grandmother's room She therefore went down-stairs and quietly seated herself in the arm-chair by the stove, watching the carryings-on of the old lady with the child.

"What do you say to the lieutenant, Theresa?" asked the former, after a while. "He has been summoned to Berlin, and is to describe the battle to the emperor. Look at baby! *He* can laugh!"

"How do you know that?" asked Theresa, with unwanted animation.

"Fritz told me. The letter came a while ago, just about the time that you sent word down that you could not go upon the ice with him. Fred will have to set off this very evening."

Theresa was silent, and yet she blushed.

"The gentlemen of the club that meets at '*Die*

Traube' also sent to request him to deliver a lecture, giving his own experiences, and telling them of the condition of that colony in East Africa that is under the protection of our government. I believe he has promised it for next week," continued her mother-in-law. "Do you know, those Andersheim men will soon be brandishing blunderbuses over people's heads; so fashionable has everything become that is African."

Miss Mischief, who was just setting out for the Krautner villa to help Fred with his packing, a few minutes later met Theresa in the front hall.

"Where are you going?" asked that lady.

"Over to Fred."

"Wait, I'll go along; that is to say, I want to see about papa."

When they reached the villa, Theresa immediately sought her father in his room, and Julia looked for Fred in his quarters.

A cloud of blue tobacco-smoke filled the plain room of the master of the house. The old man sat in his arm-chair smoking a long pipe; opposite him was his son-in-law with a cigar in his mouth. The officer had seated himself on the edge of the table and held a cigarette between his slender fingers.

Father and husband cordially welcomed the young woman. Fred silently straightened himself out of his negligent posture.

"Did Julia come over with you?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Theresa. "She wants to pack your trunk."

"Good of her!"

She took her stand behind her father's chair. She did not mean to sit down, she said; she had only come to see how he was; he had looked so pale at dinner-time.

"Have you come on that account?" called out the old gentleman with a laugh. "Why, I am as lively as a fish in water." He stood up and went to look at himself before the only looking-glass in the room, that hung over the bureau. "It is just as well, though, to look into the matter. One sometimes is brought low one knows not how," he murmured.

"But, all jesting aside, papa," exclaimed the doctor, "you look the very picture of health!"

"Yes, that is very true, Fritz," replied he, straightening himself back rather uncomfortably in his seat. "For all that, day before yesterday, I met Mrs. Norban, who was sitting in her carriage like health itself, and to-day—she lies dead!"

"Mrs. Norban!" cried Theresa. "Why, you said nothing about it to me, Fritz."

"I heard of it now for the first time, myself."

"How? You are the Norbans' family physician?"

He blew the ashes from his cigar.

"No longer so, it would seem," he tranquilly replied.

The young wife turned crimson all of a sudden.

"You are getting to be out of fashion," said she, sharply. "Since New Year the Brinkmanns and Voights, too, have ceased to call you in."

He laughed.

"Since when have you concerned yourself so much about my practice, little woman?"

"I have always been more concerned about it than you think. At all events, I am not so indifferent as you seem to be about whether or not you are more sought after than any other physician in the town," answered she, warmly.

"How, now?" growled the old man, not knowing whether she spoke in jest or in earnest.

The doctor still continued to laugh, while the lieutenant slowly lighted a fresh cigarette.

"In your place, I would try to get out of this nest," she continued. "It should certainly be easy for you to get a professorship at Heidelberg or elsewhere. But you are perfectly satisfied with the old jog-trot way of doing things here, and let yourself be horribly imposed on by these people."

"Fred," said the doctor, somewhat sharply, "be so kind as to ask his majesty if he does not perchance need a physician-in-ordinary. My wife would help me admirably to sustain such a position at court."

The old gentleman coughed and laughed aloud. Fred stood up. Without responding to the doctor's appeal, he bowed politely and took his leave, under the pretext of wanting to help his sister.

"But do tell me how it happens that you are so suddenly possessed by the demon of pride, my dear?" said the doctor, who had quickly recovered his good-humor. And he caught hold of her hand and drew her resisting form to his side. "Do you really think that the disaffection of Mrs. Norban

and two others furnish sufficient ground for my giving up the respectable position that I hold here?"

She tossed her head and drew her hand across her brow. It seemed as though she were slowly coming back to her senses.

"I am only sorry that you should subject yourself to unnecessary humiliation," said she, softly, "and I am vexed at the ingratitude of people."

"Foolish little heart! Leave that to me. I have fully as much reason to rejoice in the gratitude shown me. But we must go home. This is baby's hour. See, twilight is coming on. Good-night, grandpapa."

They went home through the garden, and together entered the nursery. Doris had lighted the lamp and spread a large, soft rug over the floor. The child that sat upon it, in a short, white-flannel gown, held out his little arms to his father with shouts of joy. Softly the old woman left the room, and the hour began that, up to this time, had been the happiest of the twenty-four for parents and child. Now, strange to say, the flow of their merriment was not as lively as usual.

"You are not in the game!" said the doctor, playfully throwing the ball to his young wife, who sat on one end of the carpet. The baby rapidly crawled after it on all fours.

"Well, to tell the truth, I feel tired this evening —*so* tired!" said she, rolling the ball toward the advancing baby, who looked up in surprise; then she got up and seated herself in a chair.

"Does your head ache, darling?"

"Slightly."

"Hush, hush, you little, noisy thing! Mamma has the headache," whispered he now to the baby-boy, and was much amused at the open mouth and inquisitive blue eyes with which he listened to the whisper, only to break out a moment after into a loud shout of joy.

"Go to your chamber, Theresa; it is quiet there; and I'll follow you directly?"

She arose and went out. She could not understand her own feelings, and did not want to analyze them. She could have done something, something wild, irrational—anything for diversion of mind, only to be rid of the thoughts that had been torturing her brain, until they made her very blood tingle. For weeks past, wherever she went or whatever she did, only one thing stood before her eyes—a handsome, sun-burned face, framed in light-brown hair, with dark, luminous eyes, that, somehow, never seemed to see her and yet exercised a power over her that was as penetrating as it was intolerable. There was always the same cool, superior air of one who could face the greatest peril, without the quiver of an eye-lash, but at the same time wound mortally, with a smile.

And that man had once belonged to her, to her only!

She rested her clinched fists upon the window seat. How absurd she was! What was he to *her?* She could have had him if she had pleased; but she had not wanted him, and was now the idolized wife of another—of another—

"Why, little one, you are still without light?" met her ears, just at this moment, in the voice of her husband.

"Yes, still without light," repeated she listlessly.

He dropped down upon the sofa and yawned perceptibly.

"Dearest," said he, "do not be vexed, but this day's work has almost done me up."

She did not ask: "What work?" And hence failed to learn that he had had to perform a severe amputation.

"Come to me, Theresa!"

She slowly stood up and drew near to him, but did not nestle up to him, as she had been wont to do. He drew her closer.

"There, I have all that I want in this world!"

She made no reply, but imperceptibly shrugged her shoulders; so imperceptibly that he did not feel it, although he held her in his arms. Thus they sat silently, until finally, after a long while, she said aloud:

"It would be fine though!"

"What would?"

"If you could do something to—"

"Distinguish yourself," said he, finishing her sentence for her. "What a foolish little thing you are! Do Fred's laurels give you no rest?"

Again she shrugged her shoulders, and after a while there came slowly and dispiritedly from her lips:

"What is Fred to me?"

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW FRED WINS APPLAUSE FROM A FASHIONABLE AUDIENCE.

Fred had really come in fashion. The newspapers had brought out long articles on him, telling in detail of his having been summoned to Berlin and the particulars of the audience. And then the burgomaster of the town had announced that Lieutenant Adami would deliver a lecture for the benefit of the fund for the restoration of Elizabeth Church, the subject of which would be his experiences in that part of East Africa that was under the protection of the German Empire.

The man who created all this sensation did not seem to have his head turned in the least, but was as cordial and unpretending as ever. Just as serenely he continued to smoke his cigarettes in an unbroken series; skated with Theresa, and also danced with her at the many entertainments that were given in his honor; and yet he danced no more with her than with others.

Meanwhile Theresa became paler and more irritable than ever, and the doctor became seriously

uneasy about her. Anxiously he consulted with his mother over this strange alteration.

"Why, you are the right doctor for your own family," she declared, with perfect composure. "I should like to see myself giving *you* medical advice and usurping your place as a practitioner. As if a young woman's whims ever amount to anything! I married, myself, when I was very young, and once I threw the bootjack at your blessed father's head."

He could but laugh at this, and was quieted for a few days, only to become afterward the more solicitous.

But, suddenly, everything that had cast a damper upon Theresa's spirit vanished, and this change occurred on the day when Fred Adami was to give his lecture at the casino. Toward evening, Theresa came, somewhat pettishly, into Aunt Rika's room, to go with Julia to the lecture; for she was provoked that the elder Mrs. Roettger had to keep her bed on account of nervous headache, and Aunt Rika, encased in shawls and pillows, had already set off for "*Die Traube;*" there some men were to carry her and her chair into the hall. She had not gone outside of her house for years, but this evening nothing could have induced her to forego the pleasure of being present at her darling's lecture.

There was no help for it: Julia had to go with her. Gladly would she have stayed at home, but Aunt Rika had almost cried when she made objections, and so Julia squeezed herself into her best dress, that had become altogether too scant a pattern for her. She felt awkward and miserable in it, and

Theresa said, as soon as she saw her predicament, that she would lend her a kerchief, for the waist did, indeed, fit too badly. Not for the world would Theresa have entered the hall with so ill-dressed a figure ; hence she herself actually helped to arrange an embroidered white-silk handkerchief around Julia's waist in such tasteful folds as skillfully to conceal the defects of the body beneath. It was fastened with a small Roman mosaic pin, in the form of a dagger, the only memento of her mother that Julia possessed, and, therefore, brought out with hesitation.

Thus they arrived at the brilliantly lighted assembly-room, which was already well filled.

The public functionaries of Andersheim were out in full force. A seat had been reserved for Theresa in the very front rank ; but Julia seated herself at the side of the stage, by the side of Aunt Rika's chair. Thence she could overlook the whole of the large audience, but did not venture to lift her eyes ; she felt anxious, very anxious, as if upon her would fall the responsibility of all that her brother did and said ; and her faith was weak ; she doubted his ability to speak well.

Upon coming in she had accidentally caught sight of Fritz, seated near the wall, in company with several other gentlemen, or, rather, her attention had been called to him, by an exclamation from Theresa, spoken in a tone of annoyance :

" Do, pray, look what a sight my husband is! Why he has not even changed his coat!" Then Julia had looked no more in the direction where

he sat. Finally, however, she did venture to do so and observed that his eyes were fixed upon herself, with an expression of surprise. His look embarrassed her, for she fancied that she read in it disapproval of her being decked in such unique style, and blushing, she again bowed her head.

Some verse (he could not remember where he had read it) involuntarily occurred to the doctor at that moment.

> " Adown the steps of Rome's great capitol she came,
> The setting sun aglow with crimson flame,
> Ne'er saw mine eye, since beauty it could trace,
> So proudly poised a head, such royal grace,
> And yet, with-downcast eye, she moved along,
> Oblivious of th' admiring, gazi..g throng."

And he turned to old " uncle doctor," the girl's guardian, and remarked to him in genuine amazement:

" Behold what a brilliant butterfly has emerged from that little brown chrysalis of a girl, and how well that gold-embroidered kerchief becomes her !"

And then his glance was directed to his fair young wife, and a shade of emotion was perceptible upon his face. The prettiest, sweetest, best thing in that whole assembly belonged to him. He loved her, loved her, now when she was pale, irritable, nervous, perhaps more tenderly than ever. He strove to obtain a look, a greeting from her—but in vain; she did not once glance in the direction where he sat.

And now appeared the orator of the evening.

His bow to the audience was faultless, his outward appearance no less so. His dress-suit fitted him to perfection, and the slight pallor of his countenance made him interesting.

"If one is to tell anything," he began, "he had better do it fully. Now, from the hour that I again set foot on German soil, no question has been asked me more frequently than this: 'How came you to think of going to Africa?' And I suspect that here, in this hall, many a one would like to know the precise motive that led me to that dark quarter of the globe. I shall be candid. I have always been interested in Africa, and have followed with enthusiasm the accounts of our exploits there. Nothing equals the admiration that I have felt for our bold pioneers, who did not and do not shun dangers, toils and privations, for the sake of ascertaining the truth about that land. Of course, a special impulse was needed to induce me to take part myself in that mighty undertaking. To know of what particular nature this impulse was cannot be of general interest. Let us assume that I wanted 'to cure an old grief amid new scenes.' Enough said! That I was not lacking, moreover, in a firm and honest purpose to be of use, to learn and to teach—yes, risk my health and life for a new bit of German soil—I believe that I have sufficiently proven.

"Permit me, then, honored ladies and gentleman, to commence my narrative at the moment when, standing on the steps to the bridge of a great man-of-war, I saw, fading away into the mist of a winter's night, the towers and roofs of the good town of

Keil, and heard the rushing of German waters beneath the prow that was being steered for a southern ocean. Real grief at parting with my native land had taken possession of me. What I had lost and was to shun pictured itself before my eyes as more enchanting and indispensable than ever before, so that I considered myself as the most miserable man on the face of the globe. And I have not found to be exactly true what the philosophers assert, namely, that removal from a spot where we have suffered softens pain. Personally, longing after home has cost me many a struggle."

Involuntarily Julia had looked across at Theresa. That young woman's face was ashy pale; consumingly her eyes lingered upon the slender man at the desk, and now he slowly turned his face toward her, and for a second, four eyes met in a gaze that seemed scorching to the very depths. Seeing this made Julia's heart beat wildly, and sent the blood tingling into her cheeks until dizziness seized her. She no longer heard what her brother was saying. She had clasped her hands so firmly together that it pained her. She had only one clear thought: Had Fritz noticed that look? And what was to be done, now that they had thus exchanged a glance of intelligence! And—and—oh, horrors!—hitherto her only anxiety had been lest Fred should again be carried away by his old love; lest he should be made unhappy when he saw her. Of Theresa she had not thought; for she was the wife—the beloved wife—of another, happy and enviable. And now—No, it was not possible! She forced herself to be

tranquil, and looked over at the young wife. There she sat now, with the roses again blooming upon her cheeks, slowly waving her fan, apparently listening earnestly, but without emotion. No longer a trace of that lightning-like exchange of secret intelligence which had passed between those two awhile ago. She breathed more freely. No one but herself had observed the dreadful thing. Had it really been so, or was it not a dream?

And yet her fascinated gaze could not quit those two. But she did not discover another such look. Several times, when lively descriptions were given, a smile of approval ran along the lines of hearers, but not once did the muscles of Theresa's mouth relax, and Julia thought that she did not hear what he was saying. She was thinking—oh, she was thinking—of what? And that stifling sense of oppression once more overcame her.

Now, he had ended; a low murmur of approval went through the hall. Julia saw how her brother descended the two steps of the platform and, with unmoved countenance, carried Theresa's outstretched hand to his lips, then advanced to the old lady and kissed her hand likewise.

"Beautiful, very beautiful!" whispered Miss Rika, feebly. "But—Fred—no, not here—later!"

"What do you want, aunt?"

"Ah, my boy, I had no idea that trouble had driven you away," said she, with tears in her eyes.

He smiled.

"One must adorn one's discourse a little. Do not be uneasy, aunt."

He then pushed her wheeled-chair himself down the narrow aisle between the seats, and Julia walked behind them, silently, with glowing cheeks and downcast eyes.

Near the door, where the throng was thickest, they met Mr. Krautner. He suddenly turned the direction of the rolling-chair to a side-door, and beckoned to the others to come after. A few seconds later, the family found themselves alone in a small ante-chamber, in the midst of which, under a burning chandelier, stood a covered table, furnished with every appurtenance for good cheer.

Old Mr. Krautner seemed quite intoxicated by the success of his guest, and was determined to feast well the fine, manly fellow, who had acquitted himself so splendidly as a speaker.

"There, now," said he, "take seats, ladies and gentlemen, and let us all drink the health of the African. The oysters will soon come."

Aunt Rika, however, forthwith declared, in the most positive manner, that she must go home; and the doctor said that he must hurry off, to call upon a very ill patient, and would therefore see Aunt Rika home at once.

The giver of the feast now desired them to wait until the dishes were brought in, and profited by the pause to fortify himself in the public-room with a glass of the "genuine article."

Julia suddenly found herself alone with Fred and Theresa. It was not very warm in the room, that was fitted up in a shabby, tavern-like style. Nevertheless it struck her as horribly sultry. Theresa sat

upon a sofa draped with red plush, while Fred stood before the covered table and read the bill of fare.

Absent-mindedly Julia looked around the room, contemplating the chromos of the emperor and the empress, and the hideous paper on the walls. Properly, she, too, ought to have gone home to soothe the excited old lady and to look after Aunt Minna, whose headache, after such days of suffering, was wont to vent itself toward evening in fits of caprice and scolding, and yet she was held to her place as by an iron vise. She *would* not have that pair left by themselves! If they were, to-night, guarded against themselves, then, to-morrow, perhaps, in sober daylight, the mad fancy would have vanished. And, finally, the doctor came again, when all was once more well.

She got up.

"Please do not think ill of me if I go," said she. "I do not think it right to leave aunt alone so long." Already she was at the door.

"Wait, Julia!" exclaimed the doctor, starting to follow her.

But she hurried away, calling back:

"Stay, Fritz, I implore you!"

She ran on down-stairs, hastily taking her cloak from the peg where it hung by Theresa's things, and hurried out into the dark street. Suddenly she felt a touch.

"At least allow me to see you home," said the doctor; "the way is far, and a part of the road is lonely."

"Please, please, Fritz, go back! Your father-in-

law is waiting to sit down to supper," she implored, impatiently.

"Papa Krautner? Why, he is still sitting behind a freshly filled glass, disputing so eagerly with uncle doctor that he will not even remember that he has guests to entertain, until I pull him by the sleeve. Those few minutes will not make the slightest difference."

"But I *will* not have you go with me!" cried she, beside herself. "Do you hear! I *will* not!" She stamped audibly upon the ground. "I can take perfectly good care of myself!"

And by the light of the street lantern, he saw a pale, excited countenance, but from the eyes looked forth a determined will.

She turned her back upon him and moved away at a quick pace.

He shrugged his shoulders and turned back.

"Very strange!" said he. "She does not accept the slightest attention. My mother would call it 'beggarly pride'—but there is something else at the bottom of it. I know that she does not like to walk on the street, alone, of an evening."

He entered the common-room of the inn, and brought off his father-in-law, who, with flushed face, was broaching his colonial-political views.

"Come, papa, Fred and Theresa are anxiously waiting for us, upstairs, to begin upon the nice supper you have had prepared for us."

When they went in, Theresa was standing by the iron stove. She had put her foot upon the projection of the stove-door and let the light of the flames

play upon it. Fred was just coming back from the window.

"At last!" complained Theresa. "We have waited an eternity."

Fritz drew her to the table.

"You are in a regular glow," said he. "How could you stand so close to that hot stove? You will spoil your beautiful complexion, you heedless thing!"

She shuddered.

"I was so cold!" murmured she, regarding intently the number on her napkin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SEED OF BITTERNESS TAKES ROOT.

"Fritz," asked Miss Trautmann, the next day, "did you know anything of Fred having had an unfortunate love-affair?"

The old lady had no rest since the evening before; she could not get over that remark of his: "I wanted to cure an old grief by change of scene."

The doctor smiled.

"Do not you know, aunt, that puffing is a part of the trade? Fred knew well enough how best to ingratiate himself with the ladies. So far as my observation goes, he does not look like a love-sick swain; and, to speak candidly, when one really goes away for such a cause, he is not the one to proclaim it. It may be, however, that he has an old flame here, upon whom he would like to make the impression that it was her cruelty which drove him across the seas. Be comforted, aunt, your Fred is a gay bird!"

"Julia says so, too; but he is commonly so much in earnest," sighed Miss Rika, "and he will not give me his confidence."

* * * * *

The carnival had come. Motley as ever was the merriment on the Rhine, for it filled the air with the jingle of bells, the cracking of whips and music, dazzling the eyes, moreover, with gaudy colors.

Theresa suddenly appeared like a creature transformed. If before she had been two quiet and irritable, a very spirit of frolic seemed now to have taken possession of her.

"The blood of a true Rhenish girl coming to the surface," suggested the doctor, laughingly, as she danced around the parlor in a short skirt made of pale-blue satin with white roses embroidered over it, her hair frizzed and powdered, and fancy shoes to correspond, upon her feet. She ran coquettishly by him, as though inviting him to catch her.

"The carriage is waiting at the door," warned he, accepting her dare, "and worse than that, *mother!* Come, let me put your cloak on for you!"

But she darted from one corner to the other, and at last jumped upon the sofa, all with a peculiar laugh, such as he had never heard from her before. And when, adopting her mood, he moved the table close up so as to imprison her, she even leaped upon the table, and he rapturously took her in his arms, as he was accustomed to do with his boy.

Now she suddenly looked down upon him from above with cold eyes and altered countenance.

"That old German cap is hideously unbecoming to you!" said she.

"You looked so much the more charming, Theresa!"

"Let me go, please!" demanded she.

"Yes, under one condition."

"Oh, I know what that means!"

And swift as lightning she had stooped down and bitten him upon the cheek, so that the red mark left by the imprint of her teeth was left. Just as quickly she stood upon the floor and gave him a look of mingled anger and disgust.

He did not observe this.

"Well, that passes the bounds of sport," remarked he, quietly, wiping with his handkerchief the place that had been hurt.

"You know that I cannot bear such nonsense," returned she, all at once beginning to sob. "Ah, everything in this world is horridly stupid! Everything! Everything! And to-day is carnival!"

He shook his head.

"Do you know your nerves are very much shaken?" said he. "And if you were my *patient*, you would have to stay at home."

A little while afterward, the house was perfectly still, the young couple and their mother having gone to the ball. The baby was asleep, as was also the old lady down-stairs. Only from Julia's window still glimmered a light. There she sat, brooding over the happiness of others, and upbraiding herself for the fancies that haunted her. Her maiden purity of mind revolted strongly against that which was ever anew arousing her suspicions. If she had only not surprised *that* look! If she could only forget that Theresa had already broken her troth once! But that was no troth plighted at the altar, said the girl to herself; none that was sealed by the

most sacred thing upon earth. And she thought of the lovely child upstairs in his cradle, and grew more composed. Fred was not going to stay much longer, anyhow; and when he was gone, Theresa's superficial feelings would soon revert to their proper channel.

"If he were only gone on his way! Theresa is not bad; certainly not. She only allows herself to be thus carried away by what she believes herself bound to admire. No, bad she is not!"

Next day, toward evening, the doctor came from the house of his father-in-law, at which place it was his habit to pay a daily visit. Upon the front door-steps of the villa he lingered, bethought himself and resolved to go through the garden instead of along the Rhine. He still felt tired after the ball. In the first place, they had not come home until daylight, and he had hardly fallen to sleep, when he was rung up again to bind up the wound of a victim of the carnival who had been struck by the beer-mug of a rival. The unrefreshing scene that he had witnessed at a low inn had cast a gloom over spirits that were rather fagged in the beginning.

Theresa had reigned undisputed queen of the ball, and had received the attentions of young men with the air of a young girl who can still dispose of her heart and hand. And he had stood for fifteen minutes at a time in some corner, worrying himself over the thought that a rational woman *could* take pleasure in such follies, and had planned to represent to her, in all calmness, that this attendance upon assemblies must now cease; for she was

entirely too nervous for it and dancing highly injurious to her. She had, indeed, turned paler after every dance, and her eyes grew ever more feverish.

He had not been able to have that plain talk with her in the morning, because she had slept until he had to leave home, and, at dinner, to his surprise, he had found his mother upstairs. Theresa had invited her to eat *ragout fin*—the old lady's favorite dish. And even before the dessert was brought in his wife excused herself in order to lie down and rest again. *Now*, at last, he could have a talk with her.

Gray twilight encompassed him. It was too dark to distinguish objects clearly but light enough to see tolerably well. Here and there glistened a strip of snow left lying on the edge of the grass sod and on one side gleamed the bare, white trunks of the fruit-trees, looking ghostlike through the gloom. He went along, smoking his cigar, not the nearest way, but going around the great grass circle and passing by the garden summer-house that was close to the wall next the Rhine. When the old gentleman had bought the garden, he had repaired and fitted up the old-fashioned thing, inasmuch as from its window a lovely open view of the river could be obtained. He delighted in sitting here himself in the early spring when it was not yet possible to sit in the open air, or in the late autumn when cold winds blew up from the Rhine. In winter-time it was kept locked.

He walked slowly past, and almost stumbled over the broad sandstone steps, that could hardly be dis-

tinguished from the garden-walk. Then he forsook the garden and stood for a while before the gate of his own property close by the darkening stream. Then, to one side, he heard a sharp, grating sound, and perceived a shadow that slid down the wall below the garden-lodge. It must almost certainly have come out of the window of that small house. With long strides, he began to follow the fugitive, but the next minute it had been swallowed up by mist and fog.

Then the doctor deemed it more advisable to turn around and see whether the summer-house had been broken into, in order to report to its master, if needful. Perhaps a boatman might have sought these comfortable quarters for the night.

The garden was now shrouded in ghostly gloom, only he thought he saw something light flit through the gate that connected with his own grounds. Or was it imagination? He *must* have been mistaken, for, when he looked again, he positively believed that he had mistaken the shining body of the birch-tree by the gate for some moving object. He was surprised, though, to find ajar the door that was always locked at this season of the year.

In the entry he lighted his small pocket-lantern and stepped into the tiny room. Nobody there. He opened the wardrobe; the old gentleman's garden-suit hung there, and over it his straw hat. On the other side stood cups, paper-matches and an old brass coal-scuttle in undisturbed serenity. He cast the light upon the windows; they were closed; only, one shutter was not bolted and gaped

somewhat. He made it secure, and then again took a survey of the premises. The rug in front of the sofa had been pushed awry, else—

Suddenly he started, and stared as though spell-bound upon an object at his feet, then stooped over and picked up a soft, white thing. The fabric was of silk, embroidered with gold.

"Julia's kerchief!" said he, not knowing himself why he should feel such strong indignation as now took possession of him. "Julia's kerchief!" repeated he, with a short, scornful laugh.

He extinguished the light in the lantern and seated himself on the crazy little settee, as though he needed to gather strength before he could take in such an astounding idea. A man to jump out of the window, and Julia with him, in this secluded spot, alone! The proud girl that up to this time had appeared to be so pure and transparent, was she like— But no comparison occurred to him.

"But that comes of never having known what love is, from childhood up," murmured he, bitterly. "And yet, for all that, it is incomprehensible. But I must warn her, help, advise her."

He jumped up and hurried out into the open air, with the kerchief in his hand. It had become perfectly dark. One of the servant-girls met him near the gate connecting the two places.

"Can you tell me if my wife is at her father's?"

"Mrs. Roettger was not here to-day," answered the girl; "nobody, indeed, has been at our house, except you, doctor. The lieutenant has not been there for some hours. I believe he was going to walk

to"—she named a neighboring village—"I only heard him telling Mr. Krautner."

"Oh, yes, I know," he answered, abstractedly moving forward

In his own house he saw a light in the nursery and in his wife's boudoir. It was dark, though, in Aunt Rika's rooms. He opened the door to her room and called in:

"Is Julia there?"

"Yes," answered the girl's rich, deep voice.

"Have you been at home all the evening?"

A brief silence; then a "No!"

"I beg pardon! Where were you, Julia?"

"I—" again a pause—"how can that interest you?"

He made no reply to this.

"In a quarter of an hour, will you come to my room for a few minutes—to the study, I mean?"

"With pleasure!" sounded back.

Fritz repaired to his own chamber, laid the kerchief carefully upon the desk, and went to look up his wife.

Theresa lay upon her sofa, in the boudoir, the lamp being obscured by a dark shade. She looked pale, and a chill shook her frame.

"Ah—ah!" said he, solicitously. "Are you going to increase my practice?"

"I am so tired," she lamented.

"You should have gone out and had the refreshment of a walk. Haven't you been out at all to-day?"

"No!" she gasped.

"Always here on the sofa? No wonder, then,

that you are chilly. Have you been reading, I wonder? If you would only give that up as soon as you are taken with one of these attacks!"

"I would like to go to sleep."

"That means I am to leave you, my dear? Well, but I must have a serious talk with you—it cannot go on so any longer?"

She started up.

"What is not to go on so any longer?"

"Oh—oh! Not now, in the morning, I said! Be rational, and sleep off your bad feelings. I shall see to the house being kept quiet!" He nodded gravely to her and left the room.

"Oh, these women!" he murmured, as he tapped at Aunt Rika's door.

"Are you coming, Julia?"

"Directly!" she answered.

He went in advance, seated himself at his study-table, and screwed up higher the lighted lamp, then rested his cheek upon his hand. His heart beat like that of schoolboy's. Immediately after she entered.

He looked searchingly at her, as she now stood before him, without saying a word. She had a suffering look, and her countenance had lost its infantine expression. All at once, he fancied that he discerned something in the beautiful features that denoted inward conflict, secret passion.

"Julia," he began, and speech was somehow difficult for him, "you know that you have always had in me a friend—a brother—or have I not been this to you, Julia?"

She looked at him, and the twitching of the

muscles about her mouth became more marked, and her demeanor was almost haughty.

"Oh, certainly!" she answered.

"You can see for yourself that it must touch a brother in the most painful, trying manner to discover in his sister—" here he stopped, and walked up and down the room; he did not know how he should tell her that he had discovered her secret. "See that kerchief!" he finally said hoarsely, pointing to the light fabric by the lamp.

She looked at it and then at him calmly, with an expression of surprise, though, in her eyes.

"I just found it. You probably forgot it, being so engrossed with your interview—in the pain of parting, perhaps, too—" And provoked by her composure, "ah, Julia, child, how could you so far forget yourself?"

Her eyes had dilated strangely.

"That kerchief—I—am to—"

"Be open with me, Julia," he implored. "That you should fall in love some day, was a matter of course, but I have always fancied that—as is right and customary—it would be brought about by Aunt Rika or me being approached by an honorable man, who should freely and frankly sue for your hand never did I think that you would give your heart to a lover with whom you would have to hide yourself, who must needs make his escape through the window!"

She started up.

"You are crazy!" shrieked she. "Oh, it is—it is—" Then she abruptly hushed, and her hand felt

for the back of the sofa, while she drew the other before her eyes, as if she had become dizzy. "Oh, me! Oh, me!" rang through the apartment.

"Yes, it is better that you should not deny the truth and give me your confidence. All may yet be well. I implore you, Julia, to make a clean breast of it. Let me talk with that man. I am ready to make all allowances for you, though it be with a heavy heart. You have not had a mother, and Aunt Rika did not have the art of winning your love. You have been heart-hungry all these years, and probably have not had the courage to say to aunt: 'I love and am beloved!' I will honor your confidence—help you. But confess, child; tell me who he is. It cannot go on thus. It is unworthy of you and of us." He had drawn near to her and began to stroke her hair. "Do speak, Mischief! Speak!" said he, pleadingly.

"I cannot! I cannot! Leave me!" exclaimed she, pushing away his hand, her bewildered eyes roving restlessly, as though she knew not whether she were awake or dreaming.

"You cannot?"

"No! No!" And she broke out into a short, nervous laugh. "Give that kerchief to me! I want to go!"

"No, you are not going either!" cried he, passionately, provoked by that laugh. "You are not going to escape me! As master of this house, I shall suffer nobody to point the finger at you, who have enjoyed all the rights of a child here. Speak out, I tell you! I'm listening!"

She rushed forward and stood before him with uplifted hand, as though she would avenge the insult by a blow.

"Point the finger at me?" she gasped.

He seized her hand and drew her down. Julia's ashy, pale countenance had an expression awful to behold.

"Reflect. You wore this kerchief a few days ago. I saw you in it at your brother's lecture. Am I mistaken? Yes or no?"

Her head suddenly fell.

"It is my kerchief," said she, almost inaudibly.

"And who was that with you?"

"I cannot tell."

"You will not confess to me?"

"No."

Then anger took sudden possession of him.

"I never expected to see the day when you would go into forbidden paths!" exclaimed he, carried out of himself. "Go, then! We are done with one another!"

She walked out, the hand that held the kerchief hanging limp by her side, and her whole attitude being one of utter despair. When she reached the door, though, her head was thrown back and her figure became erect.

With firm step she passed out of the house and through the garden. Breathless she reached the villa beyond and asked for her brother. He was in. She found him on the sofa, smoking a cigarette and reading. He was aghast before the threatening countenance of the pale girl.

"What has happened now?" cried he, starting from his couch.

"You will please pack your trunk and be off," said she, struggling for composure.

"Why so?"

"Because you are no longer to deceive an honorable man. I know all! You were with Theresa in the summer-house, as of old—made your escape through the window!"

He pretended to look astonished, but his pallor fully confirmed her statement.

"What is that to you?" growled he, angrily. "Who saw me?"

"Fritz."

He gave a short laugh.

"Well, it only brings the matter more quickly to a crisis. As for the rest, does the doctor know that Theresa was there, too?"

"He does not know it."

"Well, why are you making all this ado, then?"

She gazed upon him with horror.

"Fritz believes that I was there with a—"

Her voice failed her.

"Ah, that is rich! You have left him under that impression, I hope?"

"Yes," said she, with quivering lips. "Because he would not survive the knowledge that Theresa had behaved so shamefully."

Fred drew himself to his full height.

"Shamefully? No, my dear child, you do not understand this affair, so ought not to pronounce judgment. It is a great deal for you to take the

blame upon yourself. I am grateful to you for it, and shall never forget this clever stroke of yours. But spare me any criticism of Theresa. She came to the summer-house at my request, so that we could at last talk unreservedly to one another, and consult over the shaping of our future course. She loves me and intends to separate from Fritz, and that's the whole story."

"She loves you?" asked the girl, before whose eyes confused shadows floated. "That is not true. She cannot have said that, and if she did, she has persuaded herself into it. You must leave, Fred, this very night, if you are a man of honor. I'll send your things after you. Theresa will come to her senses! I know it! But get ready! Make haste!"

And, in feverish haste, she brought his hat and overcoat.

"Do not get so excited!" said he, composedly. "Let things take their natural course. There is a right way to do everything. I'll go when the proper time comes, and our relations have been cleared up."

"Do you call that a right way?" cried she, planting herself in front of him, with flashing eyes. "Is it right to destroy the happiness of the best, the noblest of men?"

"It is retribution," answered he, rolling up a new cigarette. "He cheated me out of my bride. How he managed it, I know not, but, at all events, under the mask of the honest man, that becomes him admirably. As for the rest, retribution has come without

my seeking. Theresa has confessed to me that the old love has revived in her as strongly as when we first met."

Julia turned to go, with a mute gesture of abhorrence.

"Whither away now?" cried he after her. "I counsel you to be after none of your nonsense, else—"

She made no reply. Her plan had miscarried. Now there was only one other way—Theresa! But as she stood before the door of the boudoir upstairs, she heard the voice of the doctor, who was solicitously inquiring after the health of the wife who was betraying him. Julia clinched her teeth and went down-stairs again.

In her agony of mind, she wanted to go to Minna, but she had still sufficient presence of mind left to say to herself that if this woman were acquainted with the situation, she would immediately put the whole house into commotion, and destroy what little hope there was of rectifying the evil done, and *his* happiness would be forever destroyed. And, nevertheless, something must be done! All at once she thought of old Mr. Krautner, and ran to the house-door.

"Where—where are you going?" sounded the voice of Minna behind her. "Walking abroad at night is not the style with us, young woman! The girls of our family stay respectably within doors of an evening!"

And going past her, Minna locked the door and ostentatiously stuck the key in her pocket.

Now, Julia knew that the old lady had listened to the interview with Fritz, that this very evening the girls in the kitchen would be whispering the welcome gossip to one another, with every embellishment possible. She could have shrieked for indignation and grief. At this instant, the doctor came downstairs. He went straight to his study, and did not turn his head in her direction, as he said:

"I desire that my wife be left undisturbed for the rest of the evening."

She silently followed him with her eyes, and then went into her own chamber. It was impossible for her to tell Aunt Rika good night—impossible to lie down to rest. She felt as though the narrow walls might close her in; the air seemed unbearably hot. With nervous impetuosity, she tore open the window. Then she began restlessly to pace to and fro in the room, wringing her hands. From time to time she drew them mechanically over her aching brow, that was beaded with cold sweat. It was long past midnight when her silent pacing of the floor at last ceased.

She drew a chair up to her bureau and pulled out its top drawer. There, in perfect order, lay all the small treasures of her joyless youth. Absent-mindedly she took this or that paper-box into her hand and surveyed its contents. There were the dear, prohibited ear-rings; there was her mother's pin, the little dagger with the mosaic handle; there a few books of poetry that Fritz had given her at confirmation; finally, a blank-book, upon the brown-

leather back of which was engraved, in gilt letters, "Diary."

It had been a Christmas-gift from Theresa, one of those presents that are thoughtlessly selected and only given because it was expected of one to give. She had laid it in her drawer that holiday, along with other more or less useless gifts, not without reflecting, with a bitter smile: What were those blank leaves to her? Probably destined to remain as empty as her life. What was it that she cared to inscribe upon them? And then she had suddenly dipped her pen in the ink and dashed off a few lines, in the bold, free hand peculiar to her:

"You ask me how my days go by?
I 'll tell you, if you care to know:
No step can make my heart beat high,
Nor parting make my pulse more slow.

"And know you why I am so sad—
Why so defiant I can be?
Once strong the thirst for love I had,
And no one gave a drop to me.

"Love's golden wine was sparkling clear,
And many smiled and took a sip,
All others drank love's draught so dear;
But no one put it to my lip.

"Once only came a gleam of joy;
Love stooped and, with a winsome glance,
Held out the chalice; no alloy
My soul discerned, nor looked askance.

"Deceitfully the colors shone
The beaker's brim around;
I longed to have it for mine own;
'T would make my sick heart sound.

"But when I stooped my thirst to slake,
Then broke the glass in twain;
My lips were parched, dry, as of yore;
My heart the seat of pain.

"And that is why I am so sad—
Why so defiant is my tone.
For me no love was to be had;
Henceforth, forever, I'm alone!"

She smiled over the verses, but almost compassionately, wondering how she could ever have composed rhymes. Then came the thought how she would blush if the eye of any other should fall upon those lines, and her fingers itched to tear the page out of the book and destroy it. But again she let her hand drop. A thought struck her, which she sought in vain to banish. Why, then, should she be forever the one sacrificed—forever play the part of the peacemaker? What concern was it of hers if Theresa chose to separate from her husband and give herself to another? Would *he* not then be free! And he would most assuredly recover from the blow. A man like him does not die when he loses something that must henceforth be worthless to him. And even if he should never learn of his wife's unfaithfulness, what could a wife be to him, who was kept in the line of duty only by main force? This could never again be a happy union. No, never! He would not be the man of nice sensibility that he was, if he could endure the thought of his wife being chained to his side merely by a sense of duty.

A BEAUTY IN LIGHT BLUE TRIPPED UP TO HIM.—*See Chapter IX.*

Was it the worst thing that could happen for him, to be unsparingly informed that he was being betrayed? Had she altogether the right to withhold the truth from him? Anxiety to save him from the loss of his beloved, pity, the sympathy that neither asks nor desires anything for itself—all these had rushed in upon her when she had declared the kerchief to be her property. But in doing this, had she not been a simpleton, the victim of an overstrained sentimentality?

Her heart revolted against the hopelessness of the future which stretched out before her more dreary and desolate than ever. Sweet, blissful dreams of coming joy would present themselves to her senses. *He* would be free, he might one day be hers, and Heaven was her witness that she would leave no stone unturned whereby the past might be obliterated and full atonement made to him and his child --that—

"Ah, that child!"

Was that child to lose his mother?

"And what a mother!" exclaimed the rebellious heart.

Nevertheless, she was his mother, and surely Theresa's soul could not be so utterly perverted but that for the sake of her son she would bless the hour in which she had renounced her misguided fancy in order to cleave to her husband.

And Julia raised her head and, with dry, burning eyes, looked the picture of determination, although, unfortunately, in the solitude of that little chamber, there were none to be impressed.

"What is to become of you?" asked the bewitching voice.

She did not know. She had already endured so much, why not this added load, that she should be deemed a frivolous, disreputable character? But, no! This was something she could not stand. *His* contempt? Never! It were best if she could die! In this case it was no cowardice—certainly not!

Oh beautiful life! Oh golden youth! How many years lay yet before her, and if she should go forth and strike out for independence, somewhere in the world there must be a resting-place for her where she could breathe freely and see the sun and the fair, fair earth with some degree of complacency.

There! what was that? Just above her chamber a door was violently slammed, and immediately afterward Theresa's voice was distinctly heard, but almost choked by sobs. Now, well-known steps passed through the hall, then the jarring of a door. Fritz had gone into his study,

What could it signify? Was Theresa going to— Julia's limbs suddenly became heavy as lead. She stood motionless and leaned over to listen. The sobbing overhead continually increased in vehemence, and now she also distinguished the old nurse's voice.

Julia suddenly made up her mind, turned abruptly and went out. The deep stillness of night prevailed throughout the house. The lamp was burning in the hall, for it was never put out until morning. Fritz would have it so, in case he might be called to a patient in the night. Julia went upstairs. On the

top step sat the black house-cat, and he blinked at her sleepily. The old hall-clock struck three as Julia went by.

Theresa's outcries were now distinctly audible, and they had the unpleasant sound of those made by a spoiled child who cannot carry his point. Julia's way led her through the nursery. In the glimmering light of the night-lamp she saw the curly head of the lovely boy resting sweetly on its pillow, and the empty bed of his nurse. The door to Theresa's sleeping-room was ajar, and the voice of the old woman was just now heard to say:

"Do, madam, compose yourself, and drink this glass of water! What is the good of so much crying? You will only make yourself sick."

Julia entered without further ceremony.

"What is the matter with you, Theresa?" said she, stepping to the bedside of the young woman, who appeared dissolved in tears, and wrung her hands like one in despair.

"Thank God, Miss Julia, that you are come!" now growled the old woman, setting the *eau sucrée* upon a candlestand, and vanishing into her nursery.

Theresa had started up and then stared at Julia.

"I heard you crying downstairs," said she. "What is the matter with you? Are you sick?"

"No; but I shall be so, after this treatment!" gasped Theresa, tugging at the lace with which the blue bedspread was trimmed.

"Who has treated you so badly?"

"Who? Absurd! Why, Fritz, of course? If one is not satisfied with things just as they are, then

one is called untutored, childish! And all I said was just this: Why did he have to be eternally writing— He came up here again a half-hour ago. And, the—" again she began to sob— "one thing led to another, and, at last, I just told him—"

The young wife hushed, and a bold, defiant expression appeared upon her face.

"You told him," said Julia, very deliberately, "that it would be best for you to part from him, and marry Lieutenant Adami?"

Theresa looked at Julia, as though some horrible specter stood before her couch.

"What do you mean by that?" she stammered.

"Nothing more than you know has been settled since this afternoon, and to effect which you have been working for weeks past. But I must tell you that you are behaving in a contemptible manner, when you try, by such wretched devices, to force the husband who loves you with his whole soul to consent to a separation. It is cruel! It is senseless! Have you not courage enough to say to him quietly what you have to say? It seems that you have had courage enough to talk over everything with Fred!"

Theresa had fallen back as though half-fainting.

"Who has betrayed that to you?"

"Accident, and Fred confirmed it."

All now was quiet in that room. Julia's eyes strayed through the comfortable apartment; then she again fastened her gaze upon the woman, who lay motionless there, looking up at her with wild, staring eyes.

"Will you listen to me?" asked Julia, without

leaving her station at the foot of the bed. "I would like to ask you, Theresa—"

"Spare your reproaches," interposed Theresa, passionately. "I cannot help loving Fred. You do not understand—"

"I do not understand it; no. That is to say, I once understood how you could love Fred—"

"None of you were willing for me to marry him," murmured she.

"That is not true," answered Julia.

"Not true? My father even threatened me with disinheritance, and you—you refused to help me."

"Honorable, steadfast attachment would have compelled your father—"

"Ridiculous! It is well for you to talk; but young as I then was—"

"That is no excuse for your conduct. And, at all events, you have taken Fritz, Theresa, and will hold him, too."

"No! I cannot. I no longer love him. Leave me, pray. You never did have any feeling for me! Go, I tell you, go!"

"Not before you promise me to write to Fred and tell him to go hence forthwith."

"No! No!"

"But can you draw a single easy breath in the doubtful position in which you find yourself?" cried Julia, quite beside herself. "Either write now to Fred and end this folly forever, or tell Fritz everything to-morrow morning, openly and truthfully."

"Never! I am afraid!" gasped Theresa.

"Then I'll go to your father."

"That you will not do! What concern have you in the matter? What right have you to act as my censor—you, who are not a whit better yourself?"

"I?"

"Yes, you! Or think you that I do not know how passionately devoted to Fritz you are? Can you say that you have never envied me?"

A deadly pallor spread over Julia's face.

Again a pause. From the adjoining room came the whimpering sound of the little boy's voice.

"Theresa," said Julia; and, rushing forward, she knelt down by the bed. "Listen! Pray do! Have you not thought of your child, your child whom both of you love?"

Hereupon the young woman made a gesture of impatience.

"Oh, I wish it had never been born!" she shrieked.

"You are committing a sin, Theresa!"

"It may be; it may be, too, that I am bad; but I cannot, do not want to be different!"

"And your old father?"

"My father?" And Theresa laughed scornfully. "He is more in love with your brother than I am. Have you not observed that?"

"Yes, he is fond of him; but if he knew that he was dispensing hospitality to a deceiver—"

"'A deceiver?' We deceive nobody! If Fritz had not been so abominably self-conceited, he would have been obliged to notice that I no longer love him."

"It is useless to dispute. Once more, Theresa, will you write and advise Fred to leave?"

"No, not a word. And, moreover, as a man of honor, he would not go. Do you believe that he would leave me alone in such a plight as this? The petition would be in vain. But be content. I shall return to my father's house, and all will be peacefully arranged. Only torment me no more just now. As for the rest," added she, "the matter must soon be decided; so that it can be determined whether Fred will continue to be a soldier or go with me on a trip as soon as—"

"Then I shall go once more and appeal to Fred as soon as it is day!" exclaimed Julia. "Surely, there will remain in him one spark of consideration and regard for the family whose hospitality he enjoys."

Theresa shrugged her shoulders and threw herself back upon the pillow. At the door Julia lingered, and once more gave a look at the blinded woman; but she held her tear-swollen eyes fast shut, and her hands lay doubled up upon the bedspread. Then, without another word, the disappointed mediator closed the door.

"Oh, you poor darling!" whispered the girl, as she leaned over the bady's crib, a sob coming from the faithful old nurse.

"Ah, Miss Julia, if one will throw away her own happiness so wantonly! You would not believe what the master has had to stand all this time, and what an angel of patience he has been toward his wife!"

"She is sick, Doris," said Julia. "It will be different after awhile."

"Yes, yes; if she carries her point; not otherwise."

Julia went down into her own room, but she knew not what to do. Sleep? Her nerves were overstrained; she could not rest. She began to make her toilet. The cool water was grateful to her glowing cheeks, that still burned from her interview with Theresa.

How horrible was this world! In what could one still believe, if no more in the good faith of a wife, in the love of a mother?

She had stepped to the window and looked out upon the garden, shrouded as it was in mist. Nothing of the river and the island was to be seen, only a bluish sea of fog that hid everything from view.

What could this day bring forth? Its events were vailed as yet. But ere night closes again, who knows how changed everything here will be!

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHICH WAS THE GREATER GRIEF?

In his study by the expiring lamp, the yellowish red rays of which mingled with the pale light of dawn, sat the doctor, pen in hand, a pamphlet lying before him, in which he had been writing.

He thought of something quite different from the scientific question, upon which he had just been writing, and which he wanted to discuss at the next medical congress. What had come over Theresa—this was no longer mere whimsicality and caprice, it was a graver nervous malady, and speedy relief was necessary. What had become of his supreme blessedness? Those delightful hours up in his little boudoir, the exuberant gaiety of mother and child, with the contemplation of which he could never be satisfied. He pondered over the matter. When had he observed the first signs of her altered mood?

And then there loomed up before his mind's eye a pale, beautiful face, a pair of dark, flashing eyes—Julia. He indignantly shook his head and snatched up his pen, a mixture of contempt and regret overcoming him.

What was to become of her?

She ought to stay here.

But one knows not of what sort her relatives are —who is to shield her from evil? That paralysed old aunt? She who had been a mother to the girl, but a far too strict one.

Yes, this comes of it—she has been treated no better than a servant-girl; she has never been allowed to indulge in the ordinary pleasures of girls of her age; now, Nature is having her revenge. And yet—it cannot possibly be? Her looks cannot thus deceive!

"Ah! what trouble one does have with woman-kind!" said he aloud, as though he were trying to rid himself of his sad thoughts by jesting, "here is one sick, the other—worse!"

And he arose from his seat with the leaden limbs of a man who has spent the night in a chair, instead of resting upon his bed, gathered his papers together, and prepared to go upstairs.

In the hall stood his mother with clouded brow, her gray morning-gown carelessly buttoned, her cap, with the lilac riband, awry upon her rather dishevelled hair.

"I can tell you, Fritz, it is high time that you were speaking with Julia's guardian, and if you do not, I shall have to go away myself. Early this morning, when the servants got up, they found the house-door opening on the garden unlocked and Miss Julia's room empty. If you hold her fast of an evening, then she runs away in the morning—for heaven's sake, who would have thought it."

He looked at her in sorrowful surprise. Then he caught sight of the unlucky kerchief of yesterday, crumpled up in his mother's hand.

She noticed his questioning glance. "I have just picked it up from where it lay on the stair-step," continued she, indignantly. "That is the way Julia treats things. If it had been her own kerchief, it would have been a different thing, but Theresa lent it to her out of pity and good will, and—"

"Does that kerchief belong to Theresa?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed!" answered Theresa's maid from above, and coming down-stairs, that robust Abigail stretched out her hand for the kerchief. "My lady missed it yesterday evening, and said I was to look for it."

"What, that kerchief belongs to my wife!"

"Yes, doctor. Miss Julia only wore it once, the evening the Lieutenant gave his lecture at '*Die Traube.*' The next day she returned it, and now—"

"When did my wife lose this kerchief?" The man's voice sounded so utterly disconsolate that his mother looked at him in amazement.

"I do not know," replied the maid; "but I think my lady threw it around her yesterday evening, when she went into the garden."

"Very well. I 'll give it back to her myself."

He took it and made a few steps toward the stairs, then turned around again irresolutely, but finally mounted them. It seemed to his mother as if he stumbled, and she saw how he caught at the banister for support.

Theresa was still in bed, her room smelling of *eau*

de Cologne and ether. With heavy steps Fritz entered, walked to the window and pulled apart the curtains, so that daylight streamed in. And now he turned to his young wife, and his hand held out to her the kerchief, but how that hand trembled!

"Is this your kerchief, Theresa?"

"Why do you ask?" inquired she. "Why?"

"Is this your kerchief, Theresa?"

"Yes."

"And since when have you missed it?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Since yesterday, I believe," answered she, indifferently. Then the pupils of her eyes dilated with horror. "For heaven's sake, Fritz!" she gasped. She saw the same look upon his face that had once before electrified her with horror.

"Consider," said he. "Presently, you will have to tell me exactly where you left this kerchief. I 'll come again when I—have become calmer."

And flinging the kerchief upon a table, he left the room. Down in the hall he found his hat and cane, and then he passed through the streets until he came to the country road. To the right there was a path through the fields, edged by fruit-trees, bare of leaves, and into this he turned aside. As he proceeded, he pulled off his hat and let the February wind blow upon his brow—moving on—ever on. And before his eyes there fluttered a white kerchief, embroidered with gold, before his eyes stood the spot, where he had found it—that dusky little room, with its old-fashioned sofa, as far as possible secluded from observation, evidently sought for its

privacy. And there, over the back, the kerchief had hung. And now memories came, forging link by link a chain of horrors.

Had he been blind and deaf. All, all came back to him. He had once gone hurriedly into the dining-room, and Fred—with the greatest possible coolness—had risen from his knees, saying that he could not find the spool of thread. Yes, yes. Fred —Fred!

The doctor had run forward like a madman; he suddenly stood at the entrance of a small village, where he had a very ill patient. Let him get work and perish!

Again he turned around. A child was running after him, a little fellow with fair hair and blue eyes. "Doctor, please come in and see mother," implored he, seizing hold of his coat. And the man gazed upon the child, and followed him into the cottage, where he lived. He could but think of his own boy.

When he came out again he struck into the shortest path home. Child! Yes, indeed, that poor child! And the tears came into his eyes.

In the shortest space of time, he again found himself in town, and had he not been so engrossed with his own thoughts, he must have observed that the people stared at him, and the occupants of the village houses noisily threw open the windows behind him, the women stretching their necks to look after him. An elderly man came out of a fisherman's hut on the Rhine. He was dripping with moisture, and his head was uncovered. When

he caught sight of the doctor, at first he stood still, with an air of embarrassment, then came nearer.

"Doctor," said he falteringly. "I believe they are waiting for you at home."

"For me? At home?"

"Yes, sir. They have been everywhere, looking for you, because—but don't be frightened! I think one of your family is sick."

The doctor mechanically clutched at his hat and hurried homewards, agonizing apprehension filling his heart. Then he overheard an old women saying: "I would not like to be the one to give him the news."

What had happened! Had Theresa—?

In a few seconds he had reached his own house. Whither turn? From the back door wet tracks led, over the steps, to the upper story. Up there then—

Upon the stair-landing stood his father-in-law.

The old man convulsively grasped the arm of the desperate man rushing forward to learn the extent of the calamity that had befallen the household. Mr. Krautner evidently wanted to speak, but could not; the tears rolled down his checks. "In the parlor," he finally ejaculated, and beckoned with his hand. "Enter not into judgment with her too hardly. She has been fearfully punished."

They had set the crib in the middle of the apartment, which was so richly furnished and decorated in blue, and by it stood a table covered with pillows and cloths. Suddenly the man tottered, and groaning, supported himself upon the crib-railing.

"Is it thou?" he shrieked, hugging the stiff little body in his arms, "thou—must it be thou?"

On the other side of the bed, her hands buried in her loosened hair, lay the form of a trembling, sobbing woman. "Fritz, forgive, forgive!"

He did not see her; still he clasped the boy in his arms, with pale face, seeking after some sign of life. In vain! That little heart had forever ceased to beat!

Silently he restored the dead to its couch, took a cloth from the table and reverentially lay it over the still, cold form, and left the room.

Behind him a solemn silence prevailed.

Downstairs he shut himself up in his study, and then, with a hollow groan, threw himself on the sofa. For hours he thus lay, without stirring, without thinking, without even asking himself how that horrible thing could have happened. They knocked at the door—he gave no answer.

Finally, late in the evening, his mother came and called with trembling voice: "Fritz, Fritz—come to Julia; she needs your help!"

The old lady fairly shrank away when her son opened the door, and she beheld his distorted countenance. "Fritz," sobbed she, "Fritz, be a man, think of your old mother!"

"What is the matter with Julia?" asked he, hardly.

"Why, bless me, don't you know, that she tried to save our blessed, blessed darling, and came near being drowned herself? A while ago her senses

returned to her, but now she is again lying in a dead faint."

He drew his hand across his forehead, then went to the girl's small room.

The old lady closed the door behind him, and he advanced to the bed alone. On the bureau, behind the lamp-shade, flickered a wax-taper that shone upon the girl's pale face which rested upon the pillow with an expression that was unearthly in its rigidity.

"Julia," said he, softly.

Then she opened her eyes and recognized him.

"Fritz!" And she held out her hand to him. "Fritz, I would so gladly have died in his stead!" And years of suffering found expression in the burst of sorrow that now followed.

He could not speak, but he stooped over and drew her hand to his lips.

* * * * * *

"Well, you see, Fritz," said his mother, a half-hour later, after old Doris had laid "her boy" in his little casket, "you see, Fritz, she had the child by the hand, I met her on the stair-steps and asked: 'Theresa, are you going to take that child out in this wind?'

"'Only to papa,' she answered me. And then I comforted myself and went into the kitchen, not without seeing, though, that she ran along the way between the houses so fast, that the little fellow could hardly keep up with her. And then once more I saw his red cap looking so bright behind the shrubbery, but thought no more about it. All of a

sudden I heard Julia shriek, and saw her dart along the path, when I started after her as fast as my old limbs would carry me, and lo! there was the boy's little red head floating on the water and Julia lying stretched out near it, and men coming in in a boat. Then Julia vanished entirely from view, but came up bringing the child with her; but when they took him from her, she disappeared again, and then once more rose to the surface, and missed the pole that she should have caught hold of, and the old fisherman said it looked as if she did not want to be saved at all, and they brought her in more dead than alive. And we had Uncle Doctor and his new assistant called in directly, but you were not to be found. Indeed, there was nothing that could be done to save our little angel."

"Will you not go up to Theresa?" she then asked. "God knows that she is to blame for it; for she had entirely forgotten that she had taken the boy with her, and there was the little thing paddling alone on the Rhine. But think how much she needs a little consolation."

"Never mind, mother," said he. "She needs no consolation from me."

Then she put a black shawl over her dress and went up herself to her daughter-in-law. But as she passed through one room after another, all were empty—awfully empty and silent.

"Where is your lady?" asked she, finally, putting her head into the kitchen, where the maids sat idle, with awe-stricken faces.

"Over yonder, at her father's," answered the cook.

The old woman would not give up, but followed her over there. Theresa was in the chamber which had been hers when she was a girl. She did not want to see anyone, but Mr. Krautner had her kindly invited in.

The two looked into each other's eyes, with horror depicted upon their countenances.

"Heaven help us! Is not *one* misfortune enough at a time?" asked Mrs. Roettger.

The old gentleman turned around abruptly, and, since he could not speak, he began to whistle. At last he again faced his visitor.

"That time when my Hannah died, neighbor. I thought nothing could be worse. To-day I know that it was a little pain, compared to that which now rends my heart. It strikes *her* too. My daughter —God knows how such a thing can be—came to me this morning and told me that she wanted to be separated from Fritz. Usually I could have scolded and quarrelled, but to-day, it seemed that I could not utter a syllable. And when she went on to say that she loved Frederick Adami, and wanted to marry him after the divorce, I just had nothing to say at all; only inwardly I accused myself and called myself an ass, who had supposed that I could manage everything, not reflecting that no human heart is to be fathomed, not even that of one's own flesh and blood. And when at last I put the question to her: 'How about your child, Theresa?' It was just when the boy was being fished out of the water."

Speechless, the old lady had dropped into a chair. "Oh, my boy! My poor boy!" then came slowly from her lips. And the old gentleman pressed his hand and silently nodded his gray head. At last he said:

"I cannot help it. I tried to bring her up honestly, and was so happy when she got that fine husband. If it could do any good, how gladly would I sacrifice my life! But, neighbor, as my Hannah used to say: 'There is One above who controls the destiny of us mortals.' Be still, neighbor! Be still!"

CHAPTER XXV.

TOGETHER, BUT FAR APART.

At the funeral, Theresa once more appeared in her husband's house. She wore a long crape vail that completely hid her face. She was accompanied by her father, who had suddenly been changed into an old, old man, his figure usually so erect, was bent, and his gait unsteady. He sought out the remotest corner of the entrance-hall, where the services were to take place.

Everybody knew, everybody was pronouncing judgment—his honorable name seemed to himself to be dragged into the mire.

"If the boy could have lived," he murmured, "she might yet have repented, and he would have forgiven her. But this way—" And he shyly glanced over at the little casket, that was hardly to be seen for flowers, and on both sides of which stood the mourners—*he* here and *she* there—their dead happiness between them!

Old Minna, with pale, set countenance, had placed herself by her daughter-in-law's side. She wanted to force upon the people the conviction that all the

gossip they had heard was idle—that the talk of a great scandal such as Andersheim had never chronicled in the memory of man—was a fable. If she stood by the young wife, nobody could believe it, certainly not.

The preacher spoke of a common grief, binding hearts more closely than any other of life's happenings—it sounded like mockery.

Not a muscle of the doctor's pale face quivered. All had been taken from him, faith in God and man, confidence and—the joy of his life!

The preacher closed his discourse; the casket was borne forth, and the procession of mourners formed into line.

Fritz stepped up to the weeping old man.

"Come, grandpapa!" said he, "let us go together."

CHAPTER XXVI.

TEMPEST-TOSSED ON ROUGH SEAS.

Then, for a while, all was quiet in the front-hall; only Theresa still stood there, motionless, before the black stand that had borne the casket, and at her side Minna.

"Come with me into my room," said the old woman.

And Theresa followed her; she seemed on the point of fainting.

When she got into the room, she seated herself on the broad window-bench, and leaned her head against the sewing-machine, eagerly drinking off the glass of wine that the old lady offered her. Thus she sat mutely, until the doctor came back.

His mother went to meet him in the hall.

"Fritz, she is in there still. Will you not be reconciled to each other?"

He looked the old lady up and down.

"No!" was his brief answer, and he walked staight into his own room.

His mother went back to Theresa.

"Fritz is there. Will you not go over to him?"

Theresa got up.

"You are the guilty party; do not forget that, when you are in his presence."

But Theresa made no answer. She held her vail together under her chin and went out.

Minna listened, but did not hear the opening or shutting of any door. And when she put her head out, it was just in time to see the black-cloth train of Theresa's deep mourning suit sweep over the threshold of the front door. Her daughter-in-law had gone without making an attempt at reconciliation.

Full of despair, the old woman ran across to her son. He sat in one corner of the sofa, his head propped upon his left hand, and looked up at her abstractedly.

"You should have made the advance, anyhow," she sobbed. "You know she is a spoiled child. Now she is gone, and you will never be reconciled."

Indignantly he shook his head.

"Do not speak of it," said he; "let me alone."

"Ah, you have certainly been right harsh with her. She has done nothing positively wrong. Fred had just been her sweetheart once. She would most assuredly have come to her senses."

"Do pray leave me!" he groaned.

Then she went away, shedding tears. She had meant well with her talk.

In the ante-chamber stood Louise, with a letter.

"For the doctor," she said.

His mother turned around once more and handed him the missive.

Fritz broke the seal after the old lady had left. It was a communication from Lieutenant Adami. He was at his disposal, and awaited his reply. He shrugged his shoulders and laughed peculiarly. Then he was again lost in thought.

Honor required that he should meet the spoiler of his happiness. Well, he would not be found missing; society must have its regulations. But it was absolutely indifferent to him whether the man who had been his enemy from early childhood lived or died; also, whether he shared this life with her who had deserted him or not. What was all this to him? There no longer stirred within him an iota of the passionate longing to chastise him who had robbed him of his wife, that had yesterday ravaged his soul. From the moment when clods of earth had rolled upon that little coffin, all sensation had been cold and dead, save consuming grief for the loss of his darling boy. Existence stretched before his eyes like a bare field of snow in twilight, and upon this he was to wander, was to wander *alone*, without end, without aim— Horrible!

He gasped like an animal that has received his death-stroke, and upon hearing the front-door bell ring, he bolted his own door. What cared he for the people who desired his help? Nobody helped him. Let them knock and knock!

And, finally, the day drew to a close; twilight gradually filled the corners of the room, but still he continued to sit there. Suddenly he started up— he had so distinctly heard a sweet little voice call: "Papa!"

Ah, that empty illusion! That dear little mouth was hushed for evermore! There was no longer the pattering of tiny feet overhead, no merry peals of laughter, no singing of baby-songs! Yes, the scene of his wedded bliss upstairs, of mutual harmony and love, was empty now and desolate; only a bitter taste was left after all that sweetness!

Oh, that there was something left in the world to which he might still cling! But what had he left? Even his mother was angry with him because he would not "call crooked straight" in order to drag on a life of misery to save appearances.

Then something stirred at the door; then there was a timid knock, and a faint but infinitely sweet voice said:

"Fritz, will you not come to supper? It would be well if you could eat something."

"Julia!" he murmured; and, rising, he opened the door.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AT LAST.

Three years have elapsed; three strangely quiet years. In the upstairs of that old house the shutters are closed, and the sunbeams that look through the crevices see empty rooms. Mold covers the polished floors, and the window-panes are thick with dust. The garden has become more shady, for the shrubbery on the Rhine and the grape-vines are not allowed to be trimmed. Doctor Roettger cannot bear the sight of the river, and has never again entered the garden. Where formerly there had been that door of communication between the two estates, a peach-tree now spread its arms, expalier-fashion, over the new masonry, and the acacias have shot up high that were planted along the wall.

It is very quiet in that house. Miss Rika had been buried the week before; her rocking-chair having been carried into the garret and placed beside baby's first little wicker-carriage, and Julia had spread a covering over both.

Spring has come again; it is a delicious, sunny May-day. The windows in Aunt Rika's room are wide-open, and Julia stands there sorting letters that are to be burned by Aunt Rika's desire. There lies, too, the letter that had arrived a half-hour before her death, bearing the postmark: "Rome."

Fred wrote:

"DEAR AUNT: My wife got back a few days ago from Germany. She is sorry not to have seen you, but circumstanced as we are, it was impossible to pay her respects to you. Mr. Krautner has departed this life unreconciled to us, and disagreeably surprised us by his will; he divided the inheritance between her and his nephew, of whose existence even, Theresa had no previous knowledge, and yet he was the preferred party. Now, our free, glorious life must needs be more contracted. 'Tis a blessing that we have no children!

"Theresa does not fancy Rome particularly; she wants to move somewhere else. We have tried nearly all the Italian cities, but are now going to Florence; to Germany she will never return.

"It grieves me that the old man proved so unrelenting—to tell the truth, I am beside myself! Gladly would I have brightened the evening of your days by assigning you a small annuity, but now it is impossible. When Theresa got to Eisenach, after travelling day and night, she found her coheir already ensconced in the villa which the old gentleman had built at the foot of the Wartburg. He is said to be a handsome young man—a chief forester

of mark. The two seem to have come to a tolerable understanding.

"Otherwise I feel unspeakably well here. It is my native air.

"God keep you!"

"Your faithful nephew, FR. ADAMI.

"P. S.—I looked for my father's grave, but it could no longer be found. You see, I wanted to keep my promise."

Julia added this to the other letters in the basket that stood in waiting. The old lady had been in no condition to apprehend its contents when it reached Andersheim. It left Julia cold.

Fred had resigned from the army and married Theresa. They had soon learned this piece of news; but, as a general thing, Aunt Rika was chary of telling what was in the letters that she only occasionally received. She had never recovered from the catastrophe of the drowning, but grew ever weaker and weaker; and, finally, her memory became affected, and she spoke of Fred as if he were still a boy, and lamented that he and Fritz would not be friends. But for Julia she had imbibed a touchingly grateful love. That calm, beautiful girl knew now that she was indispensable to one person in the world; that one person listened for her step and loved the sound of her voice; and unwearied seemed her efforts to minister to the sufferer. Before the invalid slept her last sleep, her eyes shone with the luster that is sometimes a premonition of the soul's approaching departure as she fixed them upon her adopted

daughter, and her lips moved. Julia stooped down and caught her meaning:

"Thank you! God reward you for your faithfulness!"

Holding the hand of the weeping girl clasped in her own, Aunt Rika fell asleep.

Now that, too, was past. Julia was free—free as the bird that was just rocking himself on a twig of the blooming apple-tree close by, and pouring forth a volume of song. Now he spread his wings and flew away, into the blue sky, the blooming, laughing world.

She, too, must lift her wings, but it would be a terrible flight. Here she could not stay. Who wanted her? Aunt Minna over there in her peevish unsociability had no need of her. And he? Ah, he had no taste for anything but his books and his patients! With the regularity of a clock he went away early, came back and held his office-hours, and when done with that, the carriage was at the door, and he paid visits in the country round about, for he had been more sought after than any physician far or near, since the death of "Uncle Doctor," and was hardly able to attend to his practice. Half the night, moreover, he was accustomed to sit over his desk. He only lived for duty, and seemed no longer conscious of the emptiness of the house; measuring the barren waste of his life with steady step and unmoved countenance. And yet all the children ran after him, and the old ladies, too, called him in, gladly, saying that he supplied medicine for the mind as well as for the body. Only here his lips seemed

sealed; here, where from every corner he was greeted by the recollection of vanished joys.

Julia looked around sorrowfully, ere she again locked the old desk and took up the basket in order so carry it into the kitchen and commit the letters to the flames.

She *must* go, she was superfluous here!

Towards evening she came into Mrs. Roettger's room. The old lady sat knitting behind her geranium-pots and looked out upon the quiet yard. A little while before she had cut some asparagus for supper, and was now resting. She was still active as a housekeeper, and would never admit that she needed any lightening of her burdens.

"After supper I want to go to the cemetery," said she, perceiving the girl's approach; "in case that Fritz comes in later, Louisa is to boil him some fresh asparagus—as far as that goes, however, I have already given her directions. Have you gotten through looking over those things?"

"Yes, aunt, entirely through, and I was just wanting to have a talk with you. You see, Aunt Rika left me all her little possessions. It was so good of her."

"Well, it was simply her duty," declared Minna, dryly.

"But," continued Julia, "I must ask the favor of you, aunt, to allow a little space in the house for the dear old furniture, for I cannot take it with me."

"Take it with you! Where to?"

"Somewhere in the wide world, aunt. What is there for me to do here?"

"Yes, to be sure, when one rightly considers it, there is nothing for you to do here, that is so. Well, for aught I care, the things may stay here to the end of time. Bless me, there's room enough in this house and to spare."

She took the needle that she had just knitted with and drew it through her gray hair, and her spectacles grew moist, so that she had to wipe them off before she could go on knitting.

"I did not think once that my old age would be so solitary," murmured she. "But so it is, and you are right. What is there for you to do here? I am still vigorous. Well, I wish you good luck. One cannot grudge it to you. And once more, as to those things, let them stay where they are; they are not in my way; and should Fritz, some day, act again like a rational being, there is still room enough up there for new-comers."

So saying, she stood up, and reminded Louisa to see to the asparagus, for she would have to go soon.

"If you are not hungry yet awhile, Julia, you can eat with Fritz when he comes."

And Julia, nodding assent, went out into the garden, and there she sat idly, looking with dreamy eyes upon the reddish-old sunbeams that fell athwart the boughs of the nut-tree and danced upon the old garden-table below.

After a while, Aunt Minna came through the middle walk and cut off a few of the roses that were just bursting into bloom.

"Those were her favorite bushes," said she, pointing to some wildly luxuriant bushes of the hundred-

leaved rose. "I shall take her some of the earliest."

Then she walked forth in the direction of the churchyard, and upon suddenly meeting her son at the corner of a street, she only said :

"I want to visit our graves, Fritz. Eat by yourself this evening. Ah, what do you think? Julia wants to go out into the world. You see, we cannot keep her now, since Rika is dead."

He stood there, gazing upon the gloomy-looking figure in black, with the rose-buds in her hand, but spoke not a word ; he only nodded at her abstractedly and moved on through the animated street, where children were noisily playing, and which seemed filled with golden dust, under the rays of the setting sun. Only a few more sick people were to be visited, but instead of sitting patiently by their bedsides, as usual, this evening he would hardly pause to take a chair, and his features expressed unrest and suspense. He knew not himself how it happened that he took the shortest way home, through a side-street that led immediately by the river. Never had he followed that path since that day of horrors, and this evening, like one entranced, he gazed upon the blue-green water. The waves that had robbed him of his child had long since rolled by ; those into which a young being had cast herself, ready to lose her own life to save what was more precious to him, could he blame for that these others that now rolled by so crystal clear, utterly unconscious of the fatal past ?

Ah! How clear this vision was, to-day ; how

wonderfully clear! There came a steamboat puffing and blowing, now it made a wide curve, and lay-to sideways at the landing; and up there on the deck stood a female form, tall and slender, waving a white handkerchief in her hand. Was it in token of farewell? Suddenly the form trembled before his eyes. If it should be Julia?

He jerked his hat from his head, as he strode rapidly on, and his slightly gray hair was grazed by the syringa-blossoms, that leaned over the garden wall in greater luxuriance than ever before, making a bower of the narrow path below. And as he started up the steps to his own garden, there lay a rose-bud on the crumbling stones—his mother had probably dropped it—and he stooped over and picked it up. Ah, the perfume of roses! Had he been dead, dead all these long years?

And now his foot was arrested—under the nut-tree sat Julia.

She looked at him with those sweet, dark eyes of hers, with the mildness and sisterly patience that she had been showing him all these sad years of trouble.

"Fritz!" There was something like joy in her voice. "You, in the garden! But is it not a lovely evening? Would you not like to take tea out here?"

He nodded assent, seated himself on the bench and, with melancholy eyes, followed her movements as she went up the walk with quick, elastic steps.

How would it be if that step should no more be heard in the house?

And suddenly something flew through the air just in front of the girl's feet. She stooped, and held in her hand a many-colored trap-ball, and, directly afterward, from behind the neighbor's garden-wall, a curly head peeping over with longing eyes.

"Catch!" cried Julia, throwing back the ball; and when the little fellow laughingly accepted the challenge, she laughed, too; and this harmony of two voices touched the man's heart, arousing it from its long lethargy, so that it swelled with longing after happiness—such happiness as a man only tastes in domestic life.

He sat there, twirling the rosebud between his fingers, and there was a strange working of the features of his countenance. The food that she spread before him was hardly touched.

And then silence fell upon them, for there was a hush upon her spirit as well, and she fixed her eyes upon the setting sun.

Suddenly Fritz arose and stood before Julia.

"Julia, mother says you are about to leave us?"

She bowed her head in the affirmative.

"Why so, Julia?"

"Why? I am so utterly useless here," answered she, smiling as she spoke; but the tears glistened in her eyes.

"Useless! You?" said he, seizing her hand. "Ah, Julia, with the same reason might the sun vanish from the face of the heavens and ask of what use it was to the earth."

And with deep emotion he bent forward and pressed her hand to his eyes; and upon her spring-

ing to her feet in bewilderment, he gently drew her down by his side and with timid, questioning glance looked into her pale face, observing with horror the lines that had been drawn there by grief and anxiety.

"Julia, you must not go away. Stay with me—if you can forgive the blind, embittered fool. Julia, you have done more for me than tongue can tell, and I have not once thanked you!"

"Be merciful! Anything but compassion for love," said she in a low tone.

"Ah!" He gave a short laugh. "Compassion! Which of us two has the greater need of compassion? From you I want charity, compassion, patience—all—all! Do not leave me alone, Julia, unless you would see me go to destruction, for you alone, you alone, can give back to me faith in truth and love!"

"I?"

"Yes, love; you alone."

It seemed to her as though she must be dreaming. Over yonder the children were shouting at their games of ball, and outside the Rhine was rushing and the air was sweet with a thousand flowers. Spring was here at last--sweet, intoxicating spring!

"Miss Mischief! Miss Mischief!" called the yellow thrush from the nut-tree.

Then she smiled.

"Do you hear that?" she asked softly. "He used to call just so when we were young."

"Do not torture me!" he added, impatiently. "I know positively this minute that I cannot live without you, Julia. And you?"

She silently put her arm around his neck, and from her eyes escaped two clear drops that flowed over her cheeks.

Oh, what a useless question!

When Mrs. Roettger came home and heard that the doctor and Miss Julia had supped in the garden, in surprise she directed her steps thither. Suddenly, she paused. Under the nut-tree stood—well, she would sooner have expected to see the sky fall—stood the morose, embittered recluse, holding Miss Mischief in his arms, and he kissed her, both seeming to have forgotten that there was any one in the world beside themselves.

She made a short turn to the right-about and went back to the house.

"Yes, yes, miracles and signs happen nowadays," whispered she.

And, after she got to her room, she stood before the glass and took the black ribbons out of her best cap, laying it in the bureau-drawer, with her accustomed particularity, and just as composedly donned her every-day cap and apron.

"Well," murmured she, "when you come to think, this is the simplest solution. To be sure, I should not have hit upon it. Ahem! And it is wondrous strange, too," she added, "how something can steal into one's heart without one being aware of it. When she told me, to-day, that she would have to go away, it gave me a regular shock. To think that it should turn out, after all, that Miss Mischief is to be my daughter-in-law! And one

thing must be admitted: She is good—very good. And she loves him and—"

"Mother, here is a daughter for you!" interrupted at this point the voice of her son.

And, hand in hand, the doctor and his betrothed crossed the threshold.

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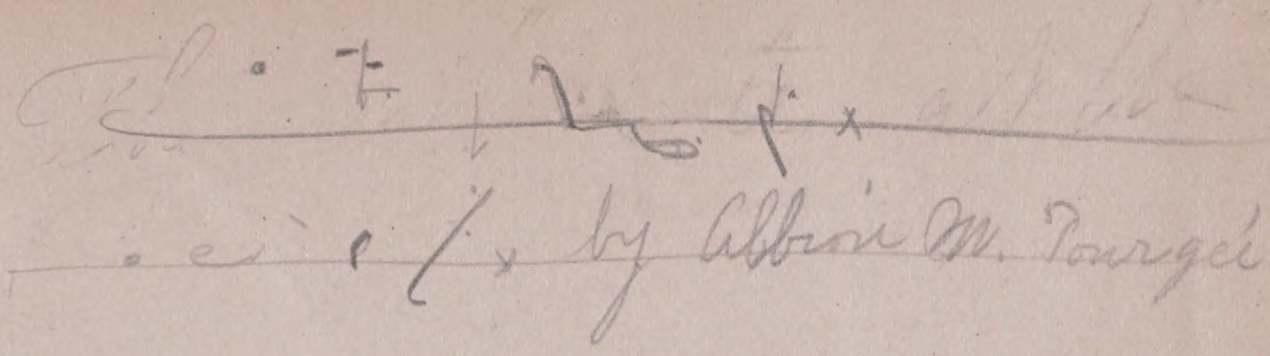

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